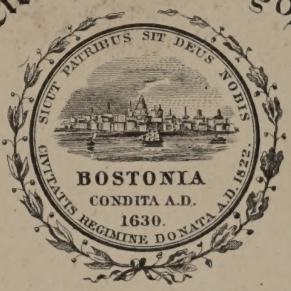
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08630 619 6

Shelf No. 714.96.11.

Public Library of the City of Boston



Given Nov. 23d 1870 by Wm. F. Channing M.D.
and Mrs. Mary Channing Eustis.

No. L. 9928

FROM THE LIBRARY
OF
WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.
Boston, 1842.

Wm E Channing

SERMONS

BY THE LATE

x x 7496.11

REV. SAMUEL C. THACHER.

WITH A

MEMOIR

By F. W. P. GREENWOOD.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY WELLS AND LILLY.

.....

1824.

I 992 8
Channing

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT:

District Clerk's Office.

BE it remembered, that on the twentieth day of February, A. D. 1824, in the forty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Wells and Lilly, of the said District, have deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the Right whereof they claim as Proprietors, in the Words following, *to wit* :—

" Sermons by the late Rev. Samuel C. Thacher. With a Memoir by F. W. P. Greenwood."

In Conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, " An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the times therein mentioned " and also to an Act entitled, " An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the times therein mentioned ; and extending the benefits thereof to the Arts of Designing, Engraving, and Etching Historical and other Prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

PREFACE.

The Sermons now presented to the public, have been selected from the late Mr. Thacher's manuscripts, with the permission of his relatives; and such corrections have been made as alone seemed necessary to fit them for the press. It is believed that they will form a valuable addition to our treasures of practical divinity. As discourses for family reading, they will not suffer, perhaps, in comparison with any which have been published.

In whatever light they may be regarded by the public, the Editor is confident that they will be gratefully received by those for whose particular instruction they were composed, and who still remember the looks, the tones, and the gestures with which they were accompanied, when pronounced by lips that have long been silent. By them, these Sermons will be cherished as a valuable memento of their departed friend.

Prevented by the will of Providence from any longer addressing the same religious society as their pastor, the Editor feels a mournful pleasure in thus partially restoring to them the benefits of his predecessor's labours, and in being permitted to join his own name with one so highly and deservedly revered.

F. W. P. GREENWOOD.

Feb. 5. 1824.

CONTENTS.

MEMOIR OF MR. THACHER. - - - xiii

SERMON I.

ON EARLY PIETY.

Prov. xxiii. 26.—*My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.* - - - - - 1

SERMON II, III.

ON THE NECESSITY OF A RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE OF ACTION.

Heb. xi. 6.—*He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* - - - - - - - - 14

SERMON IV, V.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE THOUGHTS.

Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.—*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* - - - - - - - - 38

SERMON VI.

TRANSIENT RESOLUTION.

Phil. iv. 1.—*Therefore my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.* - - - - - 59

SERMON VII.

LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

Rom. xiii. 9.—*And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* - - - 71

SERMON VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF RETALIATION.

Rom. xii. 17.—*Recompense to no man evil for evil.* 83

SERMON IX.

ON HUMILITY.

Prov. xv. 33.—*Before honour is humility.* - - 95

SERMON X.

ON HONESTY.

Job, xxvii. 5.—*Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me.* - - - - - - 109

SERMON XI.

ON CONTENTMENT.

Phil. iv. 11.—*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* - - - - - 120

SERMON XII.

THE ORIGINALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM, AN ARGUMENT FOR ITS DIVINITY.

John, vii. 15, 16.—*And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.* - - - - - 130

SERMON XIII.

SAVING FAITH.

Acts, x. 34, 35.—*Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, He that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.* 143

SERMON XIV.

RULES FOR THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 Peter, iii. 15, 16.—*Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard*

to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. - - - - - - 158

SERMON XV.

ON THE BOOK OF JOB.

John, v. 39.—*Search the Scriptures.* - - - 171

SERMON XVI, XVII.

ON THE SOURCES OF SIN IN THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION.

1 Cor. x. 12.—*Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* - - - - - - - - 183

SERMON XVIII.

ON ORIGINAL SIN.

Eccl. vii. 29.—*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.* - - - - - - - - 210

SERMON XIX.

ON THE UNITY OF GOD.

Mark, xii. 29, 32, 34.—*And Jesus answered him; The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord. And the Scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but he. And when*

Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. 224

SERMON XX.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER ON SOCIETY.

Prov. xxxi. 28.—*Her children arise up, and call her blessed.* - - - - - - - - - 243

SERMON XXI.

ON LEAVING THE OLD CHURCH.

Psalm xxvi. 8.—*Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.* 263

SERMON XXII.

ON THE DEDICATION OF THE NEW CHURCH.

1 Peter, iii. 15.—*Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.* - - - 277

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS. - - - 305

A DISSERTATION,

On the kind and degree of evidence necessary to establish the Doctrine of the Trinity, and by which we might expect the Doctrine of the Trinity would be supported in the Scriptures. - - - - - - 317

MEMOIR.

MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. S. C. THACHER.

Samuel Cooper Thacher, the author of the following Sermons, was born in Boston, on the 14th of December, 1785. He was the son of the Rev. Peter Thacher, D.D. who in the January of the same year had been installed minister of the Brattle Street Church; to which situation he was called from Malden, a village in the neighbourhood of Boston, where he had discharged the pastoral duties for the first fifteen years of his ministry. He is still remembered by many of the inhabitants both of Malden and Boston as an eloquent preacher, sincere patriot, and excellent man. He was so remarkable for the glowing piety and ready language of his devotional exercises, that the celebrated Whitfield is said to have called him "the young Elijah."*

---

* A memoir of Dr. Thacher, by the Rev. Dr. Eliot, was published in the Massachusetts Historical Collections, vol. viii. Old Series.

For many generations, indeed, the ancestors of Mr. Thacher had, from disposition and preference, been of that profession, which, among the Israelites, was made the duty of a tribe. His grandfather and great-grandfather, both of the name of Oxenbridge Thacher, though in after life engaged in different pursuits, had ministered at the altar of God, till ill health obliged them to retire from its service. The elder Oxenbridge was the first man who preached to the settlers of Stoughton; and his father was the Rev. Peter Thacher, the first minister of Milton, where he was ordained in the year 1681, and where, as was not unfrequently the case among our simple forefathers, he performed for his parishioners the duties both of clergyman and physician. He was the son of the Rev. Thomas Thacher, who came over from England in 1635, and was the first minister of the Old South Church in Boston, of which he was ordained the pastor in 1670. He also was a physician, as well as a divine; and he too was the son of a clergyman, the Rev. Peter Thacher of Salisbury in England.

From early life, the subject of this memoir exhibited those qualities of mind and heart, which are so very desirable in a teacher of religion; and the reflections of more ripened years determined him to assume a profession, which his fathers before him had followed and adorned.

He received the elements of instruction at the Free Schools of his native town; and was fitted for college at the Latin Grammar School, then under the care of the

late Mr. Samuel Hunt. In the year 1800, at the usual time for the examination of candidates, he was admitted a student of the University in Cambridge; and was graduated with its highest honours at the annual Commencement in 1804.

While at the University, he had the happiness of gaining the attachment and respect of his classmates and fellow students, and at the same time of securing the confidence and favour of the college government. He possessed good sense, good temper, and a true independence of spirit; and therefore could hardly fail to recommend himself, both to the companions, and to the guardians, of his studies. He knew that the cultivation of his mind was his business and his duty; and that the object of his instructers, in all their discipline, could be no other than his good. He was not disposed to consider every new requisition, an encroachment on his rights, and every officer of instruction, his natural foe. He thought too, that quite as much independence could be shown by firmly opposing the passionate measures of mistaken youth, as by withstanding the fancied usurpations of his superiors and tutors. But still he had so much kindness of disposition, was so affectionately attached to his companions, and so obviously free from a servile spirit, that he never forfeited their friendship, or fell under their suspicion.

Before leaving the university, Mr. Thacher had decided on the choice of a profession. In a letter to his elder brother, the Hon. Peter O. Thacher, dated the 15th of December, 1803, he communicates his intention of

preparing for the ministry. To this object, he says, "all his hopes and wishes are directed;" and he prays God that he "may not be permitted to touch his ark with unholy hands." Immediately after taking his first degree, he commenced his theological studies in Boston; and enjoyed the valuable privilege of having them directed by the Rev. Dr. Channing. The friendship formed between these two gentlemen, was intimate and confidential; was rendered still more so by the subsequent settlement of Mr. Thacher over a church particularly associated with Dr. Channing's; and was interrupted only by that event, which suspends all human connexions, till they are renewed and perfected in a better world.

In the early part of the year 1805, Mr. Thacher took charge of the Latin Grammar School, during a vacancy in the office of head master, and retained it till the appointment of Mr. William Biglow, as successor of Mr. Hunt. He then for a short time kept a private school. He belonged, at this period, to a society of gentlemen who conducted the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review, the most respectable literary work, of a periodical kind, which had then been published in our country.

The summer of 1806 introduced him to an entirely new scene of study and enjoyment, and brought to him the accomplishment of a desire, which he had long indulged, though with but little hope of its ever being gratified—the desire of seeing other countries than his own. It had been deemed expedient, and even necessary, that the lamented Mr. Buckminster, in travelling abroad for

his health, should, on account of the peculiar nature of his disorder,* be accompanied by some friend, who might be at hand in any emergency to administer assistance, and procure relief; and Mr. Thacher was requested to be that friend. This overture he immediately accepted; regarding himself as singularly fortunate in being furnished with means of accomplishing a favourite object, at the same time that a fellow traveller was secured, whom he so highly esteemed. Mr. Buckminster sailed for England in May. Mr. Thacher left Boston in June, and in July had the pleasure of joining his friend, who was then at the house of Samuel Williams, Esq. in London.

Early in August they embarked together at London for the Continent; and after a disagreeable passage of three days landed at Harlingen, in Holland. From Harlingen they crossed the Zuyder Zee to Amsterdam, and passing rapidly through Haarlem, Leyden, and the Hague, arrived at Rotterdam before the middle of the month. Here, the friends were compelled to separate. Mr. Buckminster set off on a tour through Switzerland, and Mr. Thacher proceeded through Williamstadt, Antwerp, Brussels, Valenciennes, and Peronne, to Paris.

"And what shall I write you of Paris," he says, in a letter to his brother, "of Paris, the centre of gaiety and pleasure, of splendour, folly, vanity and crime; the place where you find every form of beauty, magnificence and taste; every display of ingenuity and art; in short,

* It was epilepsy. See Thacher's Memoir of Buckminster.

every thing but goodness? The sentiment of Burke is here completely reversed, and vice *doubles* its evil by losing all its grossness.—The embellishment of Paris still advances; and it is said the Emperor has done more to adorn it in three years, than the house of Bourbon in the whole eighteenth century. By making Italy and Flanders tributary to his capital, he has formed a collection of paintings and statues, without rival in the world. He opens magnificent squares in places which were formerly crowded with dirty and narrow streets; he renews public buildings which have decayed, or supplies their place with something still more splendid; and if he should live twenty years longer, he will make Paris throughout one vast palace. Even if his fortune should be reversed, he has left such indelible traces of himself, and connected them with so many monuments of elegance and taste, that they can never be effaced without mutilating the beauty of the city."

In the same letter, which is dated October 7th, he thus speaks of the health of Mr. Buckminster, who had then rejoined him. "When you next see Mr. L. after remembering me to him with all possible gratitude and regard, tell him, that though I am unwilling prematurely to raise his hopes, yet I believe he may indulge very sanguine expectations of the complete recovery of Mr. Buckminster. He has returned from Switzerland, not merely in good, but in robust health; and ever since his arrival on the Continent, and for a month before, he has had no return, nor symptom of a return, of his disorder."

And in another letter, dated December 20th, he says; "The climate of France agrees wonderfully with Mr. B. who is in robust and uninterrupted health, although occasionally a little homesick. His greatest danger, at present, is of becoming bankrupt, from the number of books which he continues to buy." These were grateful hopes, and such as would inspire a tone of gaiety; but it is well known how mournfully they were disappointed.

On account of the restraints imposed by the Berlin decree, the friends were obliged to remain in Paris much longer than they had intended; and it was not till the February of 1807 that they were able to return to London.

While in France, Mr. Thacher had felt himself restrained from writing with freedom about politics or distinguished men; because he knew that all his letters were inspected by the police, before they were permitted to leave the country. But once more in England, he could indulge himself in full epistolary liberty; and in one of his letters from London he gives a lively description of Bonaparte, whom he saw for a few moments at St. Cloud. It does not vary in its partiulars, from descriptions of his appearance which have been given to the public; but every thing possesses a certain degree of interest, which relates to that fallen wonder of mankind.

"It was at morning mass, just before the present war was announced; and from his wearied and unrefreshed countenance, I did not envy him the night he had been passing. He had the appearance of a man, exhausted

by intensity of thought, and now vainly endeavouring to escape from the subject of his meditations. He was perpetually restless and uneasy; some part of his body was in continual motion; he was now swinging backward and forward, then drawing his hand over his forehead and face, and then taking snuff, with an air which evidently implied that he was unconscious of the action. The whites of his eyes bear a much greater proportion to the coloured part than usual, and he makes them more remarkable by perpetually rolling them about. It is a very curious fact, that it is still a dispute what is their colour, and among the thousand pictures of him hung up in Paris, part make them blue, and part hazel or black. Upon the whole, however, he has a very fine countenance, and I must confess my opinion of his capacity was heightened by observing the fine proportions which it displays."

In August Mr. Thacher sailed with his friend from Liverpool, and in September arrived in Boston. Soon after his return he accepted the office of Librarian of Harvard College, and entered on his duties in 1808.

While abroad he still had continued his connexion with the Monthly Anthology, and preserved all his interest in its success unabated. He now contributed to its pages some valuable articles, which will be noticed in an Appendix to this memoir. One of them, however, deserves a particular mention here, on account of the attention which it excited when it first appeared, and the ability with which it is written. It was a review of *The*

Constitution and Associate Statutes of the Theological Seminary in Andover; with a sketch of its Rise and Progress. Published by order of the Trustees. 1808.

In the commencement of this piece, the reviewer adverts to the very low state in which critical and exegetical theology then was in our country, and expresses a lively pleasure in the prospect of an establishment, where so lamentable a defect should be as far as possible remedied, by instructing candidates for the ministry in the knowledge of that book which they were hereafter to expound to others. So long as the means of information are communicated, he regards the peculiar doctrinal opinions of the instructers as of little comparative importance. "We profess then," he says, "before we commence the review of this pamphlet, that we rejoice in the foundation of a Theological Academy at Andover; we do not lament that it is directed by men, whose opinions differ from ours; and our only inquiry will be, whether the principles, on which it is established, are such as in any degree to impair or destroy the good, which such an institution is calculated to effect."

In prosecuting this inquiry, notice is first taken of the connexion between Phillips Academy and the Theological Institution; and the reviewer goes on to show, that the donations of two distinct bodies of founders were designed in the first instance to support two different systems of divinity, the *Calvinistic* and the *Hopkinsian*, and that those gentlemen who, after the coalition, drew up the "Associate Statutes," and the "Creed," had very

adroitly given the spirit and complexion of the latter scheme to their work, though they had avoided any expression of difference so open and hostile, as to alarm or offend the friends of the former. This position he proves by comparing the Creed, which he quotes at length, with the known principles of the two systems above mentioned; asserting, as the result of this comparison, "that the *only* article in which the Calvinists differ from the Hopkinsians is *omitted*, and that almost every important article, which the Hopkinsians *add* to Calvinism, is either expressed or strongly implied." The conclusion drawn from this circumstance is, as might be supposed, of a kind not the most favourable to the Theological Institution.

He then proceeds to state, with great strength of argument and language, his objections to the imposition of any creed whatever. The first is, that creeds "are founded on the assumption, that the essential doctrines of Christianity are not distinctly and explicitly expressed in the language of the volume which contains them." This, he says, the advocate of an imposed creed is obliged to maintain in fact, though he dare not in words; and he thus concludes his remarks on this head; "As soon as you convince us, that a study of the scriptures will not certainly secure an honest man from *fatal* error, we shall either give up our faith in Christianity, or have recourse, not to you, but to the infallible judge at Rome, to direct us."

His second objection to the use of creeds is, "that they

are directed against the honest and conscientious, and operate as a temptation and premium to dishonesty." The third is founded on the constitution of the human mind, which renders a perfect conformity of opinion impossible. The fourth is, that a right is assumed, by the imposition of creeds, "which it is the very essence of Protestantism to deny to any human being." The fifth and last relates particularly to the Andover Creed, and is chiefly directed against the provision which requires from the instructers the renewal of their signature every five years, and thus confines them with enduring chains.

An answer to this review was published in the Panoplist, a calvinistic magazine. It drew from Mr. Thacher a defence of his article, in which his former charges were vigorously supported and maintained. The following is the concluding paragraph.

"The whole object which induced us to enter into this unpleasant controversy has been attained. We were desirous of reminding those men, who were attacking our friends, invading the tranquillity of our churches, and attempting to revive the exploded absurdities of the dark ages, that the friends of rational and scriptural religion, though enemies of theological polemics, are not so, because their antagonists have nothing vulnerable in their system. The charge which they bring, that we have been influenced in this affair by a desire of interrupting the harmony of two sects, who had agreed to forget their differences, will not be believed. We disdain the imputation. We attacked them, not because they are

Hopkinsians, and not because they are Calvinists, but because their conduct and their principles, we believe, all honest Calvinists and Hopkinsians ought to unite in condemning. The charges we have adduced and supported are not to be thus evaded. It stands on record against this institution, and all the waters of the ocean can never wash out the stain, that it has been made what it is, by perverting the pious liberality of well meaning devotion, and sacrificing the first principles of Protestantism to the gratification of the unholy ambition of aspiring heresiarchs."

This is strong language, and will appear particularly so to those who were acquainted with the gentle character of the writer, and knew how averse his spirit was to the spirit of controversy. But in this instance, as well as in some others which subsequently occurred, he felt it his duty to enter into an uncongenial warfare, and defend the great principles of truth and freedom. And who indeed, even if we put out of the question the curious circumstances attending the compound creed of the Andover Institution, who is there, what truly rational and liberal man, whatever his doctrinal opinions may be, who will not exclaim with indignation against the demand of a repeated subscription to a long and minute list of disputed articles of faith? And what consistent Protestant is there, of whatever denomination, who will not think it objection enough to a theological establishment that it should presume to speak in language like this: "IT IS STRICTLY AND SOLEMNLY ENJOINED,

AND LEFT IN SACRED CHARGE, THAT EVERY ARTICLE OF THE ABOVE CREED SHALL FOREVER REMAIN ENTIRELY AND IDENTICALLY THE SAME, WITHOUT THE LEAST ALTERATION, ADDITION, OR DIMINUTION." *Shall forever remain!* Yes, on the records where you have inscribed them, on the paper where you have printed them, they may remain, for a memorial and a wonder; but for belief and reverence and instruction, who will undertake to say that they shall remain; who will undertake to say, that in the course of one or two centuries they shall not be clean swept away from the human mind, into the region of outworn and neglected things? It is really amazing to see with what complacency some men will tie together the poor shreds of their own conclusions, and then pretend to sound the unfathomable depths of futurity.

The discharge of his duties as Librarian left Mr. Thacher ample time for the study of his profession. The library of which he had the care, especially rich as it is in the department of theology, furnished him with advantages of which he did not neglect to avail himself; and though when he began to preach, he was not generally pleasing in the pulpit, on account of some defect of voice and peculiarity of manner, yet the clearness and correctness of thought, the good sense, the pious feeling, and the chaste style, which his discourses exhibited, secured for him the approbation of men of judgment and taste.

On the third of November, 1810, the Rev. John T. Kirkland was inducted President of Harvard University;

and on this joyful occasion Mr. Thacher was appointed to deliver a congratulatory address in Latin. I had then just entered college, and I well remember the graceful appearance of the orator, and the praises which his performance received from all lips, for the propriety of its sentiments, and the elegance of its Latinity. I well remember too, how universally he was esteemed, as a college officer, by the students, who loved him for the mildness and urbanity, while they respected him for the firmness, of his character.

But the time approached when he was to leave his employment at Cambridge for a sphere of higher and more arduous duties. The society of the New South Church, of which President Kirkland had been the minister, was now of course destitute; and Mr. Thacher, after preaching before them for a few weeks, was invited to supply their loss. He accepted the call, and was ordained their pastor on the 15th of May, 1811.

It has long been, and still is, the custom in our churches, for the pastor elect to read a creed, or make some profession of his faith, to the ordaining council, before the services of ordination commence. For some time, however, it has been generally understood by those of liberal sentiments, that the ordaining council is assembled for the purposes of sanction and christian fellowship, rather than of authority, and therefore that the creed which is read to them is not a demanded, but a voluntary exhibition of religious belief. It is allowed to be proper that the council should become in some

measure acquainted, in a formal way, with the opinions of the person, whose entrance on the christian ministry they have met to welcome and approve; but that is all; if they are not pleased with the character of his belief, they may refuse their concurrence in his ordination, and protest against it, and disperse; but they have not the least power to deprive the congregation of the object of their choice; of him, whom that choice alone is sufficient to constitute their minister. This principle it would be almost unnecessary to advance at the present day; but as it was not perhaps so fully conceded among us at the time of which I am speaking, it was thus decidedly implied in the beginning of the profession which Mr. Thacher read to the council which ordained him. "A belief of the principles of natural religion, and a general acceptance of the truths of Christianity, are implied in the appearance of any one, who is believed to have any sense of integrity, before this venerable council, to receive their approbation and blessing as a minister of Christ. If there should be any doubt of his sincerity, no profession, however ample, would avail to entitle him to confidence and credit. The object therefore of the profession which I am now called on to make, is, I presume, to determine whether the general views which I have taken of the gospel, will encourage the hope, that under the blessing of God, the cause of Christ will not suffer in my hands." He then expresses his belief in the being and attributes of God; in the Scriptures as his revealed word; and in Jesus Christ as his well beloved Son; and

concludes with the following scriptural, catholic, and rational view, of the objects and terms of christian communion. "It may not be superfluous to add, that I regard a credible profession of *faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah*—a proposition rendered credible by such demonstrations of repentance and obedience as in the judgment of charity may evince sincerity—as the only term of Christian communion, which the scriptures authorize me to require; and of consequence that I embrace every one who professes this faith, as a friend and brother in the Lord."

Mr. Thacher commenced his pastoral duties with the interest and zeal of one who is deeply convinced of their importance, and of the obligations which he is under to discharge them faithfully. He now lived only for his people, and directed all his exertions to the promotion of their good. He won their hearts by the affectionate friendliness of his manners, satisfied their minds by his lucid expositions of gospel truth, participated in their joys as if they were his own, and led them in their sorrows to the sources of all consolation. He realized the highest conception of a good pastor; giving himself to reading, to exhortation, to instruction; gentle unto all men; and an example to the believers, in conversation, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

But very soon a melancholy cloud rose up, and threw its shade over the morning prospect of his usefulness. He was not gifted with a constitution sufficiently vigorous to support him for any length of time, under the

manifold labours of his profession; and in the spring of the year after his settlement, he found it necessary to take a journey, for the benefit of his declining health. In the month of April he left Boston, travelled through Worcester and Hartford to New Haven, and thence to New York. From this place he took the steamboat to Albany, and continued his journey to Saratoga Springs. A free use of the waters was so beneficial to him, that after remaining there for some days, he set out on his return to Boston, with renewed strength and hopes. But the heat of the weather, and the fatigue of riding, proved excessively injurious to his weak frame. On the morning after arriving at Worcester, he was attacked with a raising of blood from the lungs, which immediately reduced him to a state of extreme debility.

This attack confined him in Worcester nearly a month; and when at last he resumed his journey, he could only travel at the rate of a very few miles a day. He did not return at once to Boston, but was detained by the hospitality of Gorham Parsons, Esq. at the neighbouring village of Brighton; where every attention and comfort was ministered to him, which his situation could require, or kindness could suggest. Here he gradually recovered, so far as to believe himself able to recommence his ministerial duties in November. A few extracts from the first sermon which he preached, on again addressing his society from the pulpit, will give some idea of his character and feelings, and cannot be otherwise than accepta-

ble to the friends who heard, and who will doubtless recollect them.

The title of the sermon was, *On recovery from dangerous sickness;* and its subject, the duties of the sick. The following notice of his own situation, toward the commencement of the discourse, must have sunk deeply into the hearts of his hearers.

"Brought by the goodness of God from the borders of the grave, I cannot better use the strength which is restored to me, than by endeavouring to gather instruction for you, as well as myself, from the scene through which I have passed. And if by this experience I should be enabled to suggest any considerations with regard to the duties of the sick, which may contribute to make any of you prepared for the hour of trial, I shall think that much greater danger and pain would not have been too dear a price for such a privilege."—"I propose to speak of the duties of those who are assailed by painful and lingering sickness; whose powers of exertion are impaired, but not destroyed; to whom a breathing time, as it were, is allotted, between the summons and the execution of that sentence, which is upon the life of us all; over whom

> Death his dart
> Shakes, but delays to strike."

The conclusion of the sermon is so affecting and eloquent, that I need offer no apology for presenting it entire.

"The last duty to which I have either time or strength to call your attention, is the duty of complete trust in God, and resignation to his will. And here, my friends, is the reward, the triumph, of a life of religion. The time to try the value of the maxims on which our lives have been formed, is the hour of severe sickness. The animating bustle and contentions of life no longer engage our attention; our ambitious hopes are over; the sound of fame grows dull to the ear; the voice of flattery no longer soothes us, and "all the worshipped pageantry" of pride is fled from before our eyes. Then it is that we fall back on the resources of our own minds. The world deserts us, and we feel, as it were, alone in the universe with our God. How miserable is that man, who feels himself for the first time in this dread society; whose life has been past in shaking off the thought of futurity, till the voice of death now forces it in thunder on his ears! How blest is he, whose life has been made a scene of preparation for such an hour; spent in habitual communion with his God, in humble desires to gain his approbation, and in forming himself for that pure society to which death is about to introduce him; and who, now that flesh and heart fail him, can stretch his feeble hand, and lift his languid eye to heaven, and say, "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

"Such, my friends, is an imperfect outline of some of the most obvious duties of the sick. You, I am sure, will not consider it as intended for an exhibition of what I have myself performed, but merely as an illustration

of the views and feelings which every Christian, under such circumstances, would desire to cherish. The trial through which the goodness of God has carried me has not been the *most* severe; and it has been lightened, believe me, very greatly, by your sympathy and kindness. I fear I must still have to ask a continuance of your indulgence; but I shall always endeavour to feel that such powers of usefulness as I can command, are altogether yours. Indeed I have learned nothing from this visitation, if I have failed to be impressed with the necessity of using my utmost diligence in performing the work which is given me to do. If I needed another admonition, I am furnished with it, while I write, when I find the lips of him* who charged me to be faithful to you, closed forever, and himself called into the presence of his God, to give an account of his own stewardship. What then remains for me, what remains for us all, but to endeavour to fill up the various duties of life with fidelity, and in the fear of God? Let us defer nothing which Heaven enables us now to perform. Let us guard against the fatal belief, that by a few formalities at the close of life, we can atone for habitual and presumptuous vices. Believe me, we deceive ourselves. It is the righteous man alone, who can have peace in death. And he can pass through the dark shadow of its valley, and fear no evil; for the rod and the staff of the Almighty, they shall comfort and sustain him."

---

* His uncle, the Rev. Mr. Thacher, of Dedham.

While Mr. Thacher was absent on his journey, he met with a severe trial in the death of Mr. Buckminster, his fellow-traveller in foreign lands, his brother in the ministry, his friend. His feelings prompted him to pay a tribute to the memory of one so dear to him, by giving to the public an account of his life and character; and his intimate acquaintance with the deceased, and knowledge of his principles and habits, perfectly qualified him for the duty. The memoir of Mr. Buckminster, which has been prefixed to each of the three editions of his sermons, is from the pen of Mr. Thacher. It is universally regarded, I believe, as an interesting and well written piece of biography; but as the volume which contains it has deservedly commanded an extensive circulation, I shall content myself with the present reference merely.

An event, which can be expected to occur but seldom, called from Mr. Thacher a discourse, which, both on account of the novelty of the subject, and the ingenuity with which it is treated, will be read perhaps with as much pleasure as any one in the following collection. The old meeting house in Summer Street, which was built of wood, and had stood nearly a hundred years, was in so decayed a state, that the Society determined to take it down, and raise a new one of stone, in its place. On the 13th of March, 1814, their pastor preached the last sermon from that pulpit, which had witnessed the labours of all his predecessors; and he seized the opportunity of enforcing considerations in themselves truly affecting,

and rendered doubly so by the circumstances of the occasion.

The new house was dedicated the same year, on the 29th of December. The sermon which Mr. Thacher preached on this occasion was soon afterward published.* It became a general topic of conversation; and while by one portion of readers it was praised as an able and lucid exposition of liberal and intelligible Christianity, and a calm and manly defence of those who had embraced such a faith, it was denounced by another portion as advancing principles, subversive of what they called the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. The weak were alarmed at they knew not what; the bigoted were surprised at the avowal of nonconformity; the cautious shook their heads, and intimated their doubts; while they who had observed the signs of the times, and who knew what they believed, rejoiced that the time had arrived, when religious opinions could be fairly and openly discussed, when reason was to be permitted to come out into the light, and men could maintain that their minds were their own.

If there is any fault to be found with this discourse, it is that it speaks rather too much in the tone of apology and confession. But this was to be expected from the existing state of the public mind, and from the untried and delicate situation in which the preacher stood. But no

* This is the only sermon which Mr. Thacher ever printed. It stands the last in this collection.

one, certainly, can read it without perceiving the firm conviction of truth which it every where displays, and the resolution not to yield a single fragment of any one great principle asserted. It would conciliate, but without the least compromise of belief.

Still it must be allowed that a few expressions in the discourse had better been omitted. Such, for example, is the one contained in the following passage; "There exist—*it is but too well known*—among the different communities of christians, some peculiar modes of regarding the truths of the gospel; and it is fitting, according to the spirit of our text, that we should be ready to justify these modes of thinking to our fellow-believers."—How is it possible, it may be said, that this could be too well known? If these peculiarities of opinion existed, they ought to have been known. It was best for all sides that they should be known; and that an end should be put to a state of things which was an improper, a disagreeable, and, from its nature, a temporary one. The time may be easily remembered, when in our religious world, there was nothing but distrust on the one side, and fear and evasion on the other; when the self-conceited theologue looked awry on the suspected heretic, and the object of his suspicion answered him with circumlocution and hesitation. There is no denying that this was the fact. And how much better is it that there has been a change, and that we can now use language, as it was meant to be used, for the expression of ideas. And again, it may be asked, how is truth ever to be known, if her face is

always to be kept under a veil? How are we to expect that our opinions are to be received, or respected, if they are studiously thrust aside, and into the shade, as if we were ashamed of them? Nothing is to be lost, in this country at least, and every thing is to be hoped, from fair discussion. "Though all the winds of doctrine," says Milton, "were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple! who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" If we are convinced that our opinions are well grounded and important, we really do not pay them a proper regard, nor do justice to the decisions of our own minds, by deprecating discovery and examination.

If it be said that the spirit of contention is unhallowed, and that ignorance is better than ill will; it is readily granted. But cannot knowledge and charity walk together, and kindness accompany discussion? If they cannot, it were happy for us if we could neither think nor feel. But surely there is nothing impossible in this union. It has been, and may always be effected; and perfect love will cast out fear.

Entertaining these sentiments, I am certain that if Mr. Thacher had been aware of all that was implied in the few words which have been noticed, he would never have used them; for they hardly comport with the spirit of firmness which marks the discourse, nor indeed with the circumstance of his public avowal of liberal opinions, without being called on to do so except by his own con-

victions of propriety and right. The expression was evidently suggested by his ardent desire of peace, and his strong aversion to pulpit controversy, and theological discord. If he were now alive, he would doubtless be among the first to acknowledge that his apprehensions were groundless. For what has been the consequence of that mutual knowledge of opinion existing among us, and of that change in the state of things, which, I feel authorized in saying, and I say it to his praise, he himself was one of the most active in bringing about? Has knowledge produced strife; or is it pouring forth perpetual controversy from our pulpits into the ears of an inflamed or a wearied audience? Should a stranger go into one of our churches in Boston, with the expectation of hearing peculiar doctrines handled, would he not be disappointed? Would he not be disappointed, Sabbath after Sabbath? And yet it is as well known of what sentiments our clergymen are, as in what churches they respectively minister. What condition can be happier than this? The pure and purifying morality of the gospel is preached as constantly as before; while the preacher is no longer troubled with surmises, cross-questionings and alarms. Every thing is known, and vain terrors have ceased. We still follow our inclination and conviction, in inculcating the precepts of Jesus; but without having it now objected to us, even by members of our own congregations, that we are preaching mere morality.

With an exception or two of this kind, which at the

most, should be termed mere inadvertences, the Dedication Sermon must be pronounced an excellent performance, admirably adapted to its purpose and to the occasion, and triumphant in its calm but powerful defence of the liberal principles of Christianity. It must be regarded too as one of the chief causes which operated in bringing on the well known Unitarian Controversy, which was soon after conducted with so much spirit and effect in this part of the country.

The sentiments of our liberal clergy had been for a long time understood, though partially and with a distorted apprehension, by their orthodox brethren; who only waited for a favourable opportunity to communicate, in one awful disclosure, their knowledge, their alarms, and their horror to the people. Such an opportunity was furnished them about this time by the Rev. Mr. Belsham of London, who in his Life of Lindsey had devoted a chapter to the history of American Unitarianism. This chapter was republished in Boston, with a short preface; and the pamphlet thus formed was soon after reviewed in an article in the Panoplist, which was written in a style of constant high colouring, and contained falsehoods which few would commit themselves by advancing at the present time. Take for example the following extract.

"From a great variety of anonymous publications it has been evident, that the defection had proceeded in the downward course to the lowest degrees of Socinianism, and to the borders of open infidelity. Further than this;—it has not been in a few solitary instances only, that

persons, who have been near the centre of all these operations, have heard from the pulpit both sermons and prayers, which neither expressed nor implied any thing more than sober Deism, and which were totally at variance with the Gospel."

It is not, perhaps, easy, now to ascertain with exactness the result which was expected from this explosion. But it is quite probable that the most sanguine among those who had prepared the train and applied the match, hoped that it would tear objects of their attack from the affections and the support of their people. But if they did look for such an event, they were disappointed. Some excitement and trouble were produced at first, to be sure; but the atmosphere soon cleared up, the agitation subsided, and the liberal clergy of Boston continued to preach, and their congregations continued to hear, a gospel of reason, righteousness, purity, hope, promise and peace.

The reply which was made to the aspersions of the Panoplist by the Rev. Dr. Channing, was published in the form of a letter to Mr. Thacher. It was dated June 20th, 1815, and was the commencement of the controversy between Dr. Channing and the Rev. Dr. Worcester of Salem.

There was one duty remaining, with regard to the explanation of his sentiments, which Mr. Thacher now thought himself required to discharge. In his dedication sermon he had given a general statement only of the principles of liberal christianity. But soon after

the appearance of the review in the Panoplist, which I have just noticed, he preached a discourse to his people on the great doctrine of the personal Unity of God.* He did not attempt to enter into a full discussion of the subject; as that was not his purpose in presenting it to his hearers. His design was simply to state to them what the doctrine of the Trinity was, and how irreconcilable it appeared, in his mind, to the doctrine, so plainly revealed and so forcibly inculcated in the scriptures, of the unity of the Divine Nature; how slender, beside, the support was which it derived from the Bible, and how expressly it was contradicted by the instructions, the prayers, and the conduct of our Saviour. We must, not, therefore, read this sermon with the expectation of meeting with elaborate argument, or systematic arrangement; but the animation, the feeling, and the direct scriptural evidence, which are to be found in it, will amply reward a perusal.

It required no little moral courage, at that time, to treat such a subject from the pulpit. The preacher was listened to with eager and intense interest, and his sentiments were almost unanimously approved by the members of his society.

A manuscript copy of this discourse was sent to Liverpool, where it was so much admired that it was printed, though without the knowledge of the author. It was

---

* Numbered xix. in this collection.

afterward reprinted here, and is, I believe, the first sermon on the Unity of God which was ever published in Boston.

This avowal of his opinions did not terminate Mr. Thacher's exertions in the cause of rational Christianity. In the same year he superintended the Boston edition of Yates' Vindication of Unitarianism; to which he added several notes, and subjoined an excellent Dissertation* on the kind and degree of evidence which are necessary to establish the doctrine of the Trinity, and by which we might expect to see it supported in the scriptures.

But his useful labours were again broken off; and the connexion with his people, which was becoming every day more intimate and important, was doomed to be suspended, and after a succession of anxious hopes and fears, at last to be dissolved.

In the autumn of 1815, he was severely visited by a return of hemorrhage from the lungs. He remained in a very feeble state through the winter and spring; and it was then determined by his physicians that he should take a voyage to Europe, as the most likely means of his restoration to health. On this advice being communicated to him, he addressed a letter to the members of his society, dated July 28, 1816, in which their concurrence in the measure was requested. This was granted

---

* Inserted at the end of this volume.

by the Society, together with the requisite means of defraying his expences abroad, with an affectionate readiness, which manifested that any step which might be thought conducive to their pastor's recovery, was precisely the one that they desired to see adopted.

In August, Mr. Thacher once more bade farewell to his home; not, as on the former occasion, for the purpose of watching over the health of a friend, but with the hope of recovering his own. And few have gone down to the sea followed by so many affectionate regrets, and so many fervent prayers.

In September he arrived in Liverpool, after a pleasant voyage, and with improved health. During his short stay in that city he was made an inmate in the family of J. R. Freme, Esq. "Of their kindness," he says, "I speak as highly as it is possible to speak, when I say that it resembled that to which I had been accustomed from my friends at home." Mr. Thacher was neither the first nor the last American, who experienced their cordial and heart touching hospitality.

In his journey from Liverpool to London, he viewed with unabated delight the surpassing beauties of English scenery; and after an interval of ten years, was well pleased to recognize its peculiar features, and see "the picture of the mind revived again."

"On my arrival in London," he says in one of his letters, "I immediately applied to a physician; chiefly however for his advice as to the place in which I shall pass the winter. He very properly requires a longer

time before he expresses an opinion of the circumstances of my case, and advises me to pass a week or two in London and its vicinity, making inquiries as to different spots, which he mentions, without instantly deciding on which to choose. Here then I am, in this vast metropolis, with the map of the wide world spread before me, and seeking some spot to which I may direct my solitary steps. Yet I assure you, that though a melancholy feeling will now and then find its way into my heart, I am habitually cheerful; for I regard myself as in the path of my duty."

The physicians whom he consulted in London were Dr. Baillie, physician to the King, and Dr. Wells. They united in assuring him, that in their opinion, no disease had fixed itself on his lungs, and that the resources of his constitution were not wasted; but still that a powerful tendency to morbid affection existed, which was most effectually to be checked in a climate different from that in which it had originated.

The place which at length was selected for his winter's residence, was not such a one as his inclinations would have chosen; for though it bore a name of promise, it was far removed, not only from his friends, but from the civilized portions of the world. "I am on the point of embarking," he writes, under the date of October the 18th, "for *the Cape of Good Hope.* I am led to this measure, by finding the opinions of the most eminent physicians here coincide with that of Dr. Jackson, and my other medical friends at home. Of course it would

have been more pleasing to me to have been recommended to some spot less distant from you all. But as I came abroad, not for pleasure or curiosity, but in order, by God's blessing, to regain the ability of being useful, I am bound to take that course which shall seem to lead most directly to this object." "And after all," he says, in a letter to another friend, "a few thousand miles make no great difference, when one is already so far from home. The great effort was to leave you at all. That being done, every thing else is comparatively easy."

The following letter to his elder brother contains an account of his voyage and arrival at the Cape.

"Cape Town, Jan. 2, 1817.

"My dear Brother,

"I have at length the pleasure of writing to you from the Cape of Good Hope, where we arrived safely two days since. When it came to the point of leaving England, I found it a greater trial of my feelings than I expected. The probability of a long and tedious passage; my entire ignorance of the persons who were to be my companions; the possibility of extreme sickness among total strangers; together with the vague notions of dreariness and barbarism, which were associated in my mind with the idea of Africa; all these things conspired to give me a momentary depression of spirits, to which I had before been a stranger; and when I received the last kind pressure of Mr. Williams' hand, on

leaving London, I found it hard to command my feelings.

"But every thing has been better, much better than I expected. My fellow passengers were civil to me from the first, and after a little time became particularly friendly and attentive. Our weather, especially on this side the line, was uncommonly good; and we made the gigantic elevation of the rock which forms Table Mountain, in sixty-five days from the Downs, without a single accident or danger. At the foot of the precipice which terminates the mountain on the south side, lies the little town from which I write to you. It is in the Dutch taste, very regular, very clean, and its whole aspect comfortable as well as pretty. The inhabitants are celebrated for hospitality; but your friends, Mr. and Mrs. Ross, are more than hospitable. They domesticate me in one of the pleasantest families I have ever met with from home, uniting all that is most agreeable in the English and Dutch characters. They remember Boston with great regard, and are always speaking of your kindness. So you see it is; the same good Providence which has protected me so long and so far, raises for me friends in a corner of the world where I could least expect to find them. My continual prayer is for a grateful and confiding spirit.

"As far as I can judge, the improvement of my health promises to compensate me for the toils of so long a voyage. A shortness of breath, which I felt in America, and which followed me to London, disappeared at sea.

My cough, if I do not deceive myself, (Dr. Jackson will understand that parenthesis,) is seldom more, and often less, than it was before my last attack. In short, if the climate of this country agree with me as well as it has hitherto, I do not doubt that, with the blessing of God, I may return to you in as good a state of health as I had in 1813 and 14. For myself I ask no more of heaven than to be restored to the ability of once more labouring in that beloved spot where my lot is cast.

"I propose to remove in a few days to Stellenbosch, a village about twenty-five miles distant, which is described as one of the most beautiful residences in the world. If I am prospered, I shall hope to embark for England in April, and thence to turn my face towards my dear native home."

The reason given by Mr. Thacher, in another letter, for not remaining at Cape Town, is, that it is subject to a south-east wind of the most unpleasant kind, which pours over the Table Mountain in hot gusts of such violence, as to fill the streets with dust, and oblige the inhabitants to shut themselves up in their houses. In a few days after his arrival, he removed to the above named village of Stellenbosch, and lived there till his departure for England.

The two following letters, which I have been kindly permitted to publish, will be valued not only as lively descriptions of the place of refuge to which he had fled from the pursuit of winter, and of his own situation and

employments there, but as pleasing specimens of his style of epistolary writing. The first of these is to his only sister.

"STELLENBOSCH, CAPE OF GOOD HOPE, FEB. 10, 1817.

"As I cannot but flatter myself that the most affectionate of sisters sometimes employs herself in thinking of the situation of her exiled brother, I am going to try to give an idea of where he is, what he is doing, how he looks, how he feels, and what are his plans. What would I not give at this moment, for a similar account of yourself and all those dear friends I have left behind me.

"Send then your imagination across the waters, many thousands of miles, to another hemisphere, a different climate, and a far different race of men. You will see, stretching far into the Southern Ocean, the land where he is; a land, not of any classic or romantic recollections, but always esteemed a land of barbarism and barrenness—the fit habitation of the lion, the serpent and the tiger, of the sooty Ethiop, the wild Caffre, and the yellow Hottentot. At first view, it will seem to you to present nothing but bare and bleak mountains of immense height and frightful steepness, or else plains of sand to which the eye sees no limit, and which are forever heated by the rays of a blazing sun. But a nearer view will show you that Providence has prepared even here scenes of comfort and peace, and even of beauty and enjoyment. The vallies between the mountains are

all fertile. Wherever you find a drop of water, there is verdure.

"If, therefore, you cast your eye nearly east from Cape Town about twenty-five miles, you will see, at the foot of the first great chain of mountains, a little village of perhaps two hundred white houses, peeping from among the green trees. Here you will find fruits of the most delicious flavour and in the greatest profusion. The air is the driest and purest you can imagine. The valley is surrounded by mountains of the most singular forms, which are so disposed as to furnish you some very romantic and agreeable rides. If you are in search of peace and solitude, there is not a spot on the globe where you will find them in greater perfection. Here it is that you will discover your wandering brother. You will see him moving about in his grey frock-coat and white underdress, looking very comfortable, it is true, but very little like a minister. His face is beaten and blackened by long exposure; and an African sun bids fair to throw over it that peculiar tinge of yellow, which you may sometimes have seen in a mulatto who is not *very* dark. He is not over corpulent, though of quite tolerable dimensions. He lodges in an admirable house, where he has every comfort. As the inhabitants are all Dutch, he has not much society; not knowing a word of their melodious and classical language. He is in a fair way therefore to improve his talents for taciturnity. Not however that he is destitute of company; for very happily the clergyman of the place, and all his family, speak

English very well. This divine is a man of great piety and benevolence, of excellent sense, and is truly liberal in all his opinions. He takes great delight in a fine garden, which he cultivates himself with great skill. At the foot of it runs a little river, perfectly clear, and always murmuring over its stony channel. The banks of this stream are covered with a fine grove of trees, planted by Mr. Borcherd's own hand. He has made a little arbour, which is always shady and cool, surrounded by myrtles and wild flowers, and trees overrun with the passion-flower, which here grows with a stem of the thickness of my arm. Here he has placed seats, on which he sits and chats with your brother by the hour; they neither of them being romantic enough to be interrupted by the turtle doves and other birds, which are singing in the branches over their heads. This same good man has several pretty and lively daughters; but it is not to be supposed that they make any part of the attraction which draws so grave a person as your brother so often to the parsonage.

"His mode of passing his time is as regular as it was at home. He gets up pretty early in the morning for a walk before breakfast; then reads a little or writes a little, till eleven or twelve; then pays a visit to *Mr.* Borchard's, and gets a walk or a ride before dinner. In the afternoon he walks or rides again; and after passing a quiet evening, always at home, goes to bed at ten. He is generally quite cheerful and contented; but it is said that there are some moments, when he is thinking of

home and the best and most beloved of friends, in which he has a little of that sickness of heart which hope deferred will sometimes give. But this is momentary; for he must be the most ungrateful of men to distrust that good Providence which has so signally protected him, so much improved his health, so smoothed the path of his wanderings, raised him up friends wherever he has been, and crowned him with loving kindness and tender mercy.

"Thus, my dear sister, I have endeavoured to give you an idea of where and how I am. It is now nearly six months since I have received a line from home; a long, long interval to one who places so much of his earthly happiness there. I do not attribute this however to the negligence of my friends, but to the distance at which I am removed from them. I anticipate with delight the period when this distance will begin to lessen. After the first of April I hope to embark for England, and to be permitted to reach home by the beginning of autumn. With this hope I will solace myself. Adieu. My prayers never cease to ascend for your happiness here and hereafter.

"Your affectionate brother,

"Samuel C. Thacher."

The other letter is addressed to a lady of his society. It is written from the same village, and bears the date of the 1st of March.

"I fear I must have seemed very ungrateful to my most constant and excellent friend, in suffering so long an interval to pass without thanking her for her letter. And yet I have been so long accustomed to have the kindest constructions put upon my actions at your house, that I am not without hope that my silence has been imputed to what is indeed its true cause, my inability to do better. The time I passed in London was full of solicitude and hurry, which scarcely left me leisure for my indispensable duties. On arriving at the Cape, I was immediately obliged to fly from the sirocco winds of the town to this little village, where we hear from the bay only once a week. Opportunities of writing have often occurred and passed without my knowledge; and I now begin this letter without knowing when it will be sent. And if with all these reasons there was mingled something of the self-indulgence of a spoiled valetudinarian, you well know where I learned to claim such privileges; and I also know where there is charity enough to forgive me.

"I wish I could find any thing around me interesting enough to repay you for the pleasure I received from your letter. But the truth is, there is scarcely a spot on the globe more barren, both in a moral and physical view, than all I have yet seen of this part of South Africa. There is nothing classical, no monuments of antiquity, no model of the fine arts, and so little of letters, that a book shop is a thing unknown throughout the colony. Man, too, is here found in his most degraded form. Some of my speculations on the dignity of our species

have never received so severe a rebuke, as when I look in the face of a Hottentot or a Bosjesman. Not that I do not find means to get over this difficulty; for he must be but a poor theorist—I think I hear your father say it—who abandons his fancies for so trifling a cause as *mere* matters of fact.

"There is nothing interesting here but the appearances of nature; and these are just what it is impossible to convey any idea of in a letter. Apparently, this is one of the confines of the solid globe; and the mountains, which are thrown up as bulwarks against the ocean, are immense masses of rock, cast in the most abrupt and rugged forms. There is no such thing in any part of the country that I have seen, as what we should call in New England a beautiful landscape. You may sometimes find in the vallies a few verdant and fertile spots, which afford a refreshing contrast to the bare summits and sterile sides of the mountains which surround them. A botanist would find a perpetual feast; but, unfortunately, I with my blind eyes am none. I am struck however with seeing many shrubs, which at home are raised with difficulty and care, growing here spontaneously in the open air. The habits of these plants are in other respects different from those of the cultivated ones. A geranium, which at home will scarcely bear the touch, I should find it difficult to crush here with a strong blow of my foot; and the myrtle, so delicate with us, is here growing in lofty hedges so strong as to be impenetrable to cattle. Their flowers however are not nearly so beau-

tiful nor so fragrant as they are in a state of cultivation; just as it is with the mind, which shoots more vigourously when left to itself, but loses in delicacy and refinement, what it gains in hardihood and force.

"The Cape is a great resort for invalids from India, many of whom I see, and find several of them very intelligent and agreeable. I never before was so impressed with the value and magnitude of the British empire there. How much shall I delight to ask your father some questions on this subject; if the inestimable privilege is accorded me of again making one of your domestic circle. The Count Las Cases, the friend of Bonaparte, is here. His constant theme is his master, whom he represents as the most amiable of men, instead of that monster of cruelty he has commonly been taken for. The Count, you will probably have heard, was sent from St. Helena for attempting to send to Europe a letter in cipher. It may be news to you that the British have taken possession of the Island of Tristan d' Acunha, and fortified it, with the avowed purpose of preventing our vessels from using it in another war. So it seems agreed on all hands that we must look forward to future contests."

This letter was the last, I believe, which Mr. Thacher wrote from the Cape. It is stated in some of his subsequent ones, that his health did not improve so much during the latter part of his residence there, as his feelings at an earlier period had led him to expect; and this is

attributed to his not being permitted by the climate to take that regular exercise, to which he had been accustomed, and which was absolutely necessary to him. He thought on the whole, however, that he left the Cape with amended health.

He set sail for England on the fifth of April. On the eighteenth day of the passage, and in fine weather, the ship suddenly sprung a leak, and took in water so rapidly, that several of the passengers were alarmed, and deserted her at the island of Ascension. Being assured by the captain that no real danger was to be apprehended, Mr. Thacher remained on board. The evil did not increase, though some rough weather was afterwards experienced, and he was safely landed at Hastings, on the twenty-fifth of June, from which place he went immediately to London.

There is little doubt that this voyage was highly injurious to his health. He himself allowed that it deprived him of much of the strength, and more than all the flesh which he had gained from his travels. It was tediously long, and was rendered uncomfortable by the excessive and continued heat, which was the consequence of the vessel's being compelled by the winds to keep near the African coast. The burning rays of an equinoctial sun beat down on the head of the invalid, and "he withered and shrunk," to use the language of an elegant tribute to his memory, "like a frail plant." A few weeks, however, passed in a milder climate, did much to restore and reanimate him.

In London, he again had recourse to medical advice; and the opinions of his physicians opposed the inclination which he now entertained to return home. They thought that after taking, as he had, three summers in succession, the severity of a New England winter would be more than he could bear. In deference to their judgment, he sacrificed his wishes to what appeared to be his duty, and dooming himself to a protracted absence from his country and friends, sought out once more a retreat for the winter.

Toward the end of August he repaired to Paris; and after a residence in that city of a few weeks, proceeded to Moulins, the chief town in the Department of the Allier. This place is near the centre of France, and was chosen by him on account of its great reputation for mildness and salubrity of climate. His health visibly declined from the period of his arrival in France; and though he himself indulged constant and soothing hopes of recovery and return to America, the friends who had opportunities of seeing him, perceived that in all probability the time of his final rest was at hand. The last letter which he wrote home bears the date of December 17th. On that day he was cheered by a visit from his countryman and friend Professor Everett, who had come from Paris on purpose to see him. The following extracts of two letters addressed by that gentleman to Judge Thacher, furnish an affecting narrative of the close of Mr. Thacher's life.

"In a letter which your brother has written you, and which you will probably receive with this, he says every thing to you of his health which I could say. To me, who had not seen him since I left him at home, near three years ago, he of course had the appearance of one reduced by long illness; but those who have seen him longer, and had some opportunity of comparing him at different periods of time, do not, as you are aware, speak discouragingly. Some symptoms, which in their continuance might have been unpleasant, showed themselves, as he writes you, on the journey from Paris, which being seventy-one leagues, was of itself rather fatiguing. The fatigue of journeying, and the indifferent quality of the food procured on the road, seemed to have produced a disorder in his digestion, which continued some days after his arrival, not without weakening him considerably. This, however, has ceased, and he is already regaining strength. His appetite is good, and the weather permits him to take daily exercise in walking abroad. He has only now to wait to see the effect on his illness of the climate of this place. It is certainly a beautiful country. The fields have not yet lost their verdure, and the flowers of the Tulip Tree, gathered from the open air, are to be seen in the flowerpots wherever you go. The Loire, all the way as I came, and the Allier, here at Moulins, that flows into it, instead of being covered with ice, like our rivers in December, is as blue and calm as on a summer's day.—The English, that have passed years here, particularly Lord Beverly, who has been

here eighteen years, are delighted with the climate; and I am convinced it is more regular than that of the Mediterranean cities, where, with some warmer days in winter, there is often a vicissitude of trying blasts. Should however any circumstance make it desirable to your brother to go further south, he is on the main Lyons road, and can always pursue his journey.

"You can hardly judge of my sorrow at finding he had left Paris but four days before my arrival; though I could not but rejoice that he was getting out of the atmosphere of the Parisian rains, and the noise of that great city. I determined to seize the first moment of visiting him here, and have only to regret that my visit is too short."

The letter from which the above extract is made, was written at Moulins. That from which the remaining notices are taken, was written at Paris, after Professor Everett had received the intelligence of his friend's death.

"Other letters will perhaps inform you of every interesting circumstance relative to this event; and from Mr. Thompson's family you will gather in the spring the most particular accounts. Their constant attentions, which contributed not a little to render the last days of our dear brother as comfortable as could have been hoped, and far more so than might have been expected in a foreign land, will enable them to satisfy to its extent

your curiosity in this respect. But I cannot forbear mentioning to you what I had myself an opportunity of observing, or have learned from his servant.

"The journey to Moulins, as I have already mentioned in my other letter, was very fatiguing, and immediately followed by symptoms both distressing and alarming. This seems to have been the last effort of nature to throw off the disease, and not being successful—as, from the character of the complaint, such an effort could not be—an unfavourable turn was to be anticipated. But as the local symptoms yielded, under the treatment of Dr. Bell, as the lost appetite began to return, and as there was the promise of a mild and pleasant winter, instead of apprehending any ultimate bad effect of this attack, it seemed only to have delayed awhile the experiment to be made of the climate. But I do not think that any considerable portion of the strength, lost in this severe attack, was ever recovered; and it seems to have put the delicate springs of life, already so long and greatly strained, to a trial beyond them to sustain. Nevertheless, he continued to go out in pleasant weather, and even declined being attended on his walks. He was able to take his food with appetite, he slept well, and was invariably cheerful and tranquil. His cough, however, appeared to gain, and without being at single efforts very distressing, or attended at all with loss of blood, was by its continuance very exhausting.

"It was in this condition, after an interval of about seven weeks from his arrival at Moulins, that I saw

him. I had been much grieved on my own account, at finding that he had left Paris, but four days before I reached it; and I determined to go and see him as soon as I could make the arrangement. On my arriving at Moulins, I met him walking in the street, much altered indeed from what I had last seen him at home. The wind was quite violent, and I immediately accompanied him to his lodgings. That was the last time but one that he ever went out. I passed the time I was there entirely with him; and though it fatigued him to talk, he felt interested in hearing me, and I related to him all I could recall of my travels and observations in various countries, which I thought would amuse him. He asked some questions, but upon the whole his attention seemed fixed on higher things.

"The day that I left him, he felt himself weaker than usual, and desired Capt. Burroughs to lend him his arm to walk out. This was the last time he ever went abroad. When I bade him farewell, which I strived to do without betraying the anxiety and sorrow I felt, we exchanged the expectation of meeting in Paris in the spring, and he added, that he had now no wish but to return to America. From that day he grew weaker, and I soon received a letter from Mr. Thompson, mentioning that he was visibly failing. The first of January, in the afternoon, he was seized with very violent pains, and was obliged to go to bed. Dr. Bell, on being called, thought it his duty, as he has himself written to me, to announce to him that he could probably continue but a

few hours. 'This intelligence' says Dr. B. 'he received with perfect tranquillity and resignation;' and he proceeded to make some arrangement of his affairs. His pains had yielded to the applications made, and he passed the night better than was feared. Capt. Burroughs, and his servant Josef, watched with him. In the morning his pains returned with new violence. This struggle was the last, and, like all the rest, was borne with a sweet fortitude, that makes one ashamed of impatience at the little sufferings of life. After this he was at ease, and though he said but little, recognized the persons around him, and discovered himself to be in possession of his reason, as his calmness evinced him to be in the full exercise of his faith. A little after twelve he called for some syrup to moisten his lips. His servant gave it him; he swallowed it without difficulty, rested his cheek upon his hand, and ceased to breathe!—*He died,* said his servant, *like an angel.*—The last mournful offices were performed with every possible mark of respect, and Dr. Bell read prayers over his lifeless remains."

Feelings of peculiar melancholy affect me, when I review the last years of Mr. Thacher's life.—Compelled by illness to give up the exercise of a profession to which he had devoted himself from early youth, and for which he was so eminently qualified by his talents and virtues, he takes a reluctant leave of his friends and country, in the hope of regaining under milder skies the health which had forsaken him. He crosses the ocean which

rolls between the two continents of the world; and finding no place of rest in Europe, he bends his solitary course from the crowded metropolis of England, to a silent village at the extremity of southern Africa. Here he spends month after month with little society or means of entertainment; hearing but seldom from his friends; snatching the rare opportunity of a pleasant day to wander alone among the desert hills; now visited by a scanty restoration of strength, and now doomed to see it all depart away from him again—"a sunbeam followed by a shade"—but yet with a flattering hope of recovery to support him, and a never shaken trust in God, which without hope, would have supported him still. At length his exile terminates, and he again commits himself to the sea. The unrelenting heat of the tropics robs him of nearly all his remaining strength; and hardly has the cool air of a temperate clime restored a portion of his vigour, and he blesses himself with the thought of returning home, when he is obliged to resume his weary pilgrimage, to watch again the fluctuations of his insidious disorder, and again to see his hopes alternately encouraged, checked, deceived,—and at last destroyed.

It is a sad thing to feel that we must die away from our own home. Tell not the invalid who is yearning after his distant country, that the atmosphere around him is soft, that the gales are filled with balm, and the flowers are springing from the green earth;—he knows that the softest air to his heart, would be the air which

hangs over his native land; that more gratefully than all the gales of the south, would breathe the low whispers of anxious affection; that the very icicles clinging to his own eaves, and the snow beating against his own windows, would be far more pleasant to his eyes, than the bloom and verdure which only more forcibly remind him, how far he is from that one spot which is dearer to him than the world beside. He may indeed find estimable friends, who will do all in their power to promote his comfort and assuage his pains; but they cannot supply the place of the long known and long loved; they cannot read, as in a book, the mute language of his face; they have not learned to wait upon his habits, and anticipate his wants, and he has not learned to communicate, without hesitation, all his wishes, impressions, and thoughts, to them. He feels that he is a stranger; and a more desolate feeling than that could not visit his soul.—How much is expressed by that form of oriental benediction, *May you die among your kindred!*

The piety, which with the subject of this memoir was a habit, sustained him, as we have seen, in the trying circumstances of his last illness. Affectionate and domestic in his disposition, he must have been more than usually sensible to their depressing influence; but he manifested no impatience under the burthen which his Father's hand had laid upon his spirit, because he had long been convinced that all His dispensations were just and merciful, and that it was his duty to suffer with resignation all His will.

Mr. Thacher's piety was indeed the feature of his character, which, more conspicuous and perfect than any other, reflected on all the rest its excellence and beauty. It was so connected with his principles, his actions, his conversation and his manners, that it appeared not merely to be united with them, but to control and guide them. It seemed to occupy the place of judgment and will; to rule in his mind, as absolutely as it did in his heart; and to lead him to those just conclusions, both in speculation and conduct, which others attain to by the exercise of what is called good sense and discretion. It seemed also to improve and enlarge his intellectual powers; to be as it were a distinct and central talent, supplying the rest with light and vigour, and inspiring his thoughts with a strength superior to their natural capacity. In short, it would be impossible to give an idea of his character, without taking into view this ruling principle; for he was one, whose reference to the will of God, sense of dependence on him, and trust in the promises of the Gospel, were so constant and ardent, that they gave a peculiar complexion of holiness, purity, and sweetness, to all that he said and did. He was one,

> "in whom persuasion and belief
> Had ripened into faith, and faith become
> A passionate intuition; whence the soul,
> Though bound to earth by ties of pity and love,
> From all injurious servitude was free."*

---

* Wordsworth's Excursion.

Further to exhibit the nature of Mr. Thacher's piety, let me make use of an extract from a sketch of his character by the Rev. Dr. Channing, to which I have already referred.* "It was warm, but not heated; earnest, but tranquil; a habit, not an impulse; the air which he breathed, not a tempestuous wind, giving occasional violence to his emotions. A constant dew seemed to distil on him from heaven, giving freshness to his devout sensibilities; but it was a gentle influence, seen not in its falling, but in its fruits. His piety appeared chiefly in gratitude and submission, sentiments peculiarly suited to such a mind as his. He felt strongly, that God had crowned his life with peculiar goodness, and yet, when his blessings were withdrawn, his acquiescence was as deep and sincere as his thankfulness.—His devotional exercises in public were particularly striking. He came to the mercy seat as one who was not a stranger there. He seemed to inherit from his venerable father the gift of prayer. His acts of adoration discovered a mind penetrated by the majesty and purity of God; but his sublime conceptions of these attributes were always tempered and softened by a sense of the divine benignity. The *paternal character* of God was not only his belief, but had become a part of his mind. He never forgot that he 'worshipped *the Father*.' His firm conviction of the strict and proper unity of the divine

* Published in the Christian Disciple, Old Series, vol. iv. p. 141.

nature taught him to unite and concentrate in his conception of the Father, all that is lovely and attractive, as well as all that is solemn and venerable; and the general effect of his prayers was to diffuse a devout calmness, a filial confidence, over the minds of his pious hearers."

He possessed a mind naturally strong, and had cultivated it by a judicious course of study. It was rather discriminating than original in its character; and rather clear and comprehensive than bold. Judgment predominated over fancy and invention; and you would therefore be more likely to see him following the best path of many that were presented to him, than striking out a new one. The success with which he applied his mental powers, may be estimated from the circumstance of his taking the first rank in his class, at the university where he was educated; and the distinction which he there acquired as a scholar, he always maintained.

His opinions were the result of impartial, serious and mature examination of the best evidence within his reach. They were rational, liberal, charitable. Being deliberately taken up, they were neither rashly avowed, offensively maintained, nor easily resigned. He regarded human authority as the mere dust in the balance, when weighed against truth; and though he feared dissension, he feared God and conscience more. He was moderate in all things, and yet always resolute and decided. There could be no greater error than to suppose, because he was not forward and boisterous in the ex-

pression of his sentiments, that he wanted ability to support, or firmness to adhere to them.

His manner of thinking, and style of writing, will be judged of from his sermons. He treated a subject as if he had well reflected, before he began to write upon it. He presented those views which he thought the best adapted to secure the attention of his hearers, to enlighten their understandings, and reach their hearts. The topics of his discourses were almost always devotional or practical; and when he did preach on a controverted doctrine, he spoke in a calm and christian spirit, and preferred giving a lucid and forcible statement of what he held as the truth, to abusing and denouncing what he believed to be errour. He was particularly attentive to the proper division of his subject. In looking over his manuscript sermons for the purpose of selection, I do not remember that I met with one, which did not recommend itself by a clear, methodical, and natural arrangement. In this manner he not only led his hearers by easy and sure steps to the proposed end, but imprinted the way on their memory, and enabled them, by the order and distinctness of his discourse, to carry home something more than a confused idea of what he had been saying. He aimed in all his preaching to convince and persuade, rather than to terrify. If he spoke oftener of heaven than of hell, it was not because he was afraid to pronounce the latter word in "ears polite," but because he conceived that he had better authority from his master to invite men to the abodes of light, wisdom, peace and

joy, than to consign them to outer darkness, torture, and misery. He forgot not to warn and rebuke; he hesitated not to declare the certain and awful penalties of sin;

> "Yet held it more humane, more heavenly, first,
> By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
> And make persuasion do the work of fear."*

It will be seen that his style is plain, perspicuous, unaffected, copious. His taste avoided all gorgeous and misplaced ornament, and yet could employ with effect the timely and legitimate graces of diction.

Something has already been said with regard to his manner in the pulpit. He laboured under a difficulty of utterance, connected no doubt with the weakness of his lungs, which in the latter period of his ministry was painful both to himself and those who heard him. His gestures, and indeed his whole carriage, had a tendency to give strangers the impression that he was affected. But it was an impression which soon wore off; and they who knew him, saw in this peculiarity only an external proof of his earnestness in the sacred cause, and his deep and affectionate solicitude for the spiritual improvement of his people. In other respects his manner was highly impressive and agreeable.

His deportment in private and social life was distinguished for being gentle and engaging, and at the same time dignified. They who were led by his mildness and

---

* Paradise Regained.

affability, to think that he might be too nearly and familiarly approached, were sure to be deceived. There was a line drawn about him, imperceptible but impassable, which repelled the intrusions of rudeness or levity. He won without effort the regards of friendship, and made himself the object of respectful attachment both at home and abroad. His temper was calm and equable; for his heart was the dwelling of piety and peace.—In conversation he was instructive, various, fluent; assuming no more than his part, but taking that part with readiness and ease.—To his pastoral duties he was unexceptionably attentive; and he seemed willing to sacrifice health, and even life, to their requisitions. This devotedness was repaid by the universal and zealous affection of the people of his charge. There never was a clergyman more sincerely loved, nor more deeply lamented. His loss yet seems recent to those who were accustomed to participate in the benefits of his ministrations; the gloom has not yet passed away from his church; the long day of mourning has not yet gone down; a shade of sorrow still lingers over the places which knew him, because they will know him no more.

His ashes repose in a foreign land. His friends are deprived of the melancholy gratification of paying their frequent visits to his tomb. The peasant of France passes carelessly by it, and knows not how cherished and excellent he was, whose remains it covers. The weeds may grow round it, and the long grass may wave over it, for there is none to pluck them away. But his

memory is sacredly kept in many a heart; and there stands a monument to his name more lasting than marble, in the good which he effected while living, and in the example which he has left behind him.

EPITAPH ON MR. THACHER,

ENGRAVED ON HIS MONUMENT AT MOULINS.

MEMORIÆ SACRUM
REVERENDI SAMUELIS COOPER THACHER,
IN NOVANGLIA, APUD BOSTONIENSES, OLIM CHRISTI ECCLESIÆ MINISTRI;
QUI OFFICIIS EJUS SACRIS DUM SEDULO FUNGERETUR,
QUID VERUM ATQUE HONESTUM ELOQUENTIA ET SILENTIO DOCUIT:
MITI SAPIENTIA, MORIBUS SUAVISSIMIS, CARITATE ERGA OMNES,
INGENIO DISCIPLINIS EXCULTO,
OMNI VIRTUTE, QUÆ GRATIAM AUT AUCTORITATEM CONCILIARET,
PRÆSTANS.
LENTA TABE OPPRESSUS, VALETUDINIS CAUSA, A PATRIA DISCESSIT:
ECCLESIA CUJUS MINISTER FUIT OMNE AMORIS OFFICIUM PERSOLVENTE:
SED DUOS ANNOS PER MARE ET TERRAS JACTATUS,
IN HAC URBE DEMUM HOSPES, ANIMUM DEO PLACIDE REDDIDIT;
LONGAM MEMORIAM, ET GRAVE DESIDERIUM SUI,
APUD BONOS RELINQUENS.
NATUS BOSTONIÆ NOVANGLORUM
DECEMBRIS DIE XIV. A. D. N. MDCCLXXXV.
OBIIT JANUARII DIE II. A. D. N. MDCCCXVIII.
FRATRES ET SOROR EJUS MOERENTES H. M. P.

LIST OF MR. THACHER'S PUBLICATIONS,

Not inserted in the present volume.

IN THE MONTHLY ANTHOLOGY.

Vol. II. pp. 23. 134. 187. 298. Translation of a part of Barclay's Argenis.

p. 251. Review of Pinkerton's Geography.

p. 458. Silva, No. 7.

p. 677. Editors' Notice.

Vol. III. p. 124. Remarker, No. 7.

Vol. IV. p. 309. Recollections of the Literature of France in 1806.

p. 631. Remarker, No. 28.

Vol. V. p. 121. The Editors' Address.

pp. 259. 322. 434. Review of Marshall's Life of Washington.

p. 603. Review of the Constitution and Associate Statutes of the Theological Seminary in Andover.

Vol. VI. p. 194. Defence of the Review, just mentioned.

p. 181. Review of Zollikofer's Sermons on the Reformation.

Vol. VIII. p. 249. Review of Adams' Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory.

Vol. IX. p. 255. Review of Dr. Porter's Convention Sermon.

Vol. X. p. 341. Address of the Editors.

IN THE GENERAL REPOSITORY AND REVIEW.

Vol. I. p. 345. Review of pamphlets by N. and T. Worcester.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

EARLY PIETY.

PROVERBS XXIII. 26.

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

This address of religious wisdom, though applicable no doubt to us all, seems from its connexion to have been designed by the preacher particularly for the young. It is intended chiefly for that interesting period of life, when the character is about to take its strongest and most decided direction. When the season of pupilage and discipline is expiring, and the mind is beginning to think, and to prepare to act for itself; when untaught by experience to distrust the illusions of fancy, and to disbelieve the promises of hope, life seems to the young enthusiast to open nothing but a long and gay vista, lined on every side with pleasures and honours; at this ambiguous age it is, that religion is represented as lifting her mild and sacred voice.

"My child, listen to my words, the words of your truest friend. You are about to decide the happiness of your life on earth—it may be of your

life beyond the grave. Those happy days of careless innocence, when you could repose entirely on others, have now passed away. It was not to be expected that your path was always to be pointed out by a parent's hand, its dangers foreseen for you by a parent's wisdom, and its difficulties removed by a parent's tenderness and care. It is the order of nature that each one should in due time be called to act from his own mind, and consult for his own well-being. You do not wish it should be otherwise. I see your eye already kindling with hope, and your breast swelling with ardour, at the thought of grasping the reins of self control, and becoming the arbiter of your own conduct. The world is at length all before you, and you see how lavish it is of its promises, to allure your affection, and captivate your young imagination. Life seems to you, as a distant and unexplored landscape appears to the eye of one who views it from an eminence. All is beautiful and bright. The forests wave their green and lofty tops in the western breeze; the streams glitter in the morning sun; the mountains tower in calm and solemn majesty; the vallies wind among them in luxuriant verdure; and as far as the eye can stretch, to where the land seems to touch and mingle with the sky, there is nothing to lessen the delight with which you regard so fair a vision. Here, you say, peace and contentment must surely dwell! what but happiness can find a residence here? But a nearer approach will undeceive

you. You will find that every thing has been softened and improved by distance. You will no doubt still see much to admire; much to vindicate the wisdom and goodness of the Creator and Disposer of all. But you will find too, that the paths are rougher than you thought. You will meet with difficulties which you did not expect. Where you thought to find only security, you will see that innumerable dangers were lurking. You will find flowers blooming over the precipices which theyconceal; and unless you take heed to yourself, your feet will slide where you least imagined it, and you may fall never to rise. Do not, however, hastily arraign your Creator for calling you to pass through this scene of dangers. He has wisely, though mysteriously, ordered all things. He does not leave you to explore the dark and doubtful paths of life without a guide. He hath showed you, O man, what is good; and it rests with yourself to say whether you shall obtain it. He has sent me from his own right hand to direct your inexperienced steps, to lead you in ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace. My son, give me then thy heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."

Such is the invitation which religion makes to the young. And never in the long annals of time was there one human being, who at the close of life, did not rejoice if he had listened to it, and lament with bitter tears, if he had rejected it.

Let us inquire, what is here meant by giving the heart to religion, and what are the peculiar motives which should induce the young to make such a dedication of it.

To give your heart to religion, means simply, to give to it the supreme control over your conduct and affections. It does not mean, that nothing else is to engage your regard; that you can have no duties and no pleasures, which are not strictly and exclusively the duties and pleasures of religion. It means only that you are to seek *first* and *chiefly* the kingdom of God; that every thing in life is to be made subordinate to this great object; that you are to do no actions, cherish no thoughts, indulge no feelings, gratify no desires, which religion cannot approve; that in all your plans in life you are to have respect to the proper ends of your being, and are to reduce all the principles and affections of your nature under the guidance of conscience, enlightened by the gospel. In one word, to give your heart to religion must mean, that since there is a God, you should reverence, worship and love him; that since Christ has come into the world to redeem you, he should always command your affectionate obedience and remembrance; that since life has been given you in this world for some important end, you should diligently inquire for, and faithfully pursue that end; that since you are born for another world, you should seek to fit yourself for it; and that since there is to be a day of judgment, you should

seriously prepare for it. The question is simply this; whether you shall pass through life with no aims that look beyond it; pursuing merely the pleasures, or riches, or honours, which open before you; and live and die as if you had no soul to be saved; or whether, remembering that your nature is immortal, and capable of exalted and impeperishable attainments, and that your condition in another life is to be decided by your conduct in this, you should, by habitual benevolence, incorruptible integrity, and sincere and unaffected piety, springing from christian principles, and proceeding on christian maxims, make sure your calling and election to the favour of God, and to the happiness of eternity.

I would call your attention to some of the motives for choosing the better part of the alternative thus presented to us, which are peculiarly applicable to the young. In the first place, religion is never more necessary than in youth. It is a common prejudice, arising from very erroneous views of its nature, to think that it is chiefly intended for the aged, the miserable, and the sick, and not for the young, the vigorous, and the happy. Religion is designed for our consolation, it is true; but it is also intended for our guidance and restraint; for the enlargement and direction of our views, and the progressive purification and exaltation of our natures. But all these objects are as necessary, and ought to be as

interesting, to the young, as to the mature. When indeed do we feel the necessity of all our good principles to restrain and guide us *most?* Is it in the advance of life, when the first warmth of our wishes is cooled, and a sober selfishness, if nothing else, will preserve us from all wild excess? Or is it not at that season when passion rolls her impetuous tides through our veins; when desires, yet unpalled by gratification, are rebels to our reason; and when the bitter consequences of guilt have not taught us to shun it? If too, you admit that any alteration ought to be made in our plans of life, in consequence of believing that there is a world of retribution to follow it, what season so proper for the exertion of this influence as that when our plans may be so arranged, that they shall *need* no alteration? How far better must it be, to set out in the career of life originally right, than to suffer the pain and mortification of being compelled to retrace our steps. How important, also, is it to our happiness, to be early taught by religion to estimate the world at its proper value; to regard it as a school of virtue, more than a festival of pleasure; a scene of high duties, not unmingled gratifications; to be warned before hand, that we shall have much to suffer, as well as to enjoy; and thus to be preserved from those cruel disappointments, which sadden the days of those, who have indulged such extravagant hopes of felicity, as this state was never intended to realize. In short, unless you

are prepared to say that the ardour of youthful passion needs no restraint, that the extravagance of youthful hopes needs no correction, and that the arrangement of life is not to be affected by the views which religion gives of its true design, you *must* admit, that religion is never more necessary than in the season of youth.

Another consideration is, that religion may be most *easily* and permanently engrafted on the mind in youth. The soul is not yet filled with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches. It is not yet torn by ambition, and tortured by envy. It is not yet agitated by the tempests of politics, or swallowed up in the whirlpool of fashionable dissipation. It is not yet so bound down to the pursuits of the world, as to leave it no leisure for the thought of heaven. Those sublime views which religion reveals, if permitted to enter the mind, will not find the place, which they ought to possess, preoccupied by merely terrestrial cares. The soul is yet white, and fair, and unsullied. Seize then this precious moment to engrave on it the everlasting characters of celestial truth.

But not only is the *mind* most open to religion in youth, the *heart* also is then most susceptible of its sacred influence. The fetters of habit are not yet bound around us. That tendency of our nature to settle in the course which we have long pursued, not only does not yet obstruct the power of religion, but may be brought to lend its aid to en-

throne piety forever in the breast. But unless this law of our constitution is early made the friend of religion, it will become its most formidable foe. There is a constantly increasing indisposition to change produced by the influence of habit. The longer the invitations of religion are neglected, the more unsusceptible does the soul become of its impressions. The repetition of the same arguments and the same resistance, of the same calls and the same excuses, renders us more and more fixed and easy in sin. The breast no longer smarts with remorse, the old scruples are no longer felt, the language of the scriptures, and the remonstrances of conscience, strike more and more faintly on the ear; till at length the heart becomes callous, seared, completely selfish, and thoroughly worldly, outgrows every thing but its insensibility to religious truth, and no longer has hope or resolution left.

But even when this fatal tendency of habit is counteracted, and we are arrested in the course of impenitence, still we can scarcely ever wholly avoid its consequences. There is a sceptical turn of mind too often produced, when we advance into the middle of life in habits of irreligion, which it is extremely difficult to overcome. Perhaps we meet with so much deception in the world, that we get the habit of confounding the evidence of truth with the sophistry of error; at any rate it is certain that distrust and suspicion are apt to creep over and incrust the soul, the beams of truth may strike upon

as powerfully as ever, but they have no longer the same efficacy in penetrating, illuminating and warming it, which they possessed in the soft and ingenuous period of youth. The reason may be satisfied, but incredulity still makes her power felt, though she no longer utters her voice. There is not the same connexion between the judgment and the will, between our faith and our practice, which once existed. Truth, however well supported, will no longer take that full possession of the soul, which it once did. They are gone—that generous confidence, that warm persuasion, that heartfelt homage as well as assent, which we could have given in the unsuspicious days of youth. They are all gone. Rarely, if ever, unless your temperament be peculiarly sanguine and enthusiastic,can you recal those vivid impressions and that transporting assurance, with which you *might* once have welcomed the truths of the gospel. Though his conviction may be entire, and he may act habitually on his belief, still, a man who defers his attention to religion till late in life, can seldom be a christian with more than half his soul. Cherish then, young man, the treasure of thy moral sensibility, and if thou wouldst know all the joy and peace of believing, give God thine heart in the days of thy youth.

But let us suppose that the power of habit, and this growing insusceptibility to the influence of truth, could be successfully counteracted; yet why should you be willing to encounter the misery

and sorrow of a tardy repentance? Why should you not spare yourself the anguish of being obliged to review a long course of transgression; of remembering the wasted hours, which you cannot recal; of thinking how wantonly you have slighted all the obligations of gratitude, all the convictions of your understanding, all the reproaches of conscience, and all the invitations of mercy? How too can you always assure yourself, that your repentance, when greatly protracted, is sincere? Who shall determine the value of the professions, which the approach of death may call forth? If indeed, by the favour of Heaven, you should be permitted to live long enough to give proof of your sincere reformation, it is well. But if you die in the midst of your extorted and unexecuted resolutions of amendment, who in this world can answer for their reality or their worth? But were it nothing more, still what ingratitude is it, to defer to the end of life that religious obedience, which is every moment due to the most High? What a return is it to the God of mercy, to come to Him, only when the world has left us alone? How unjust, that we should give to Him nothing but the feeble powers, which age and sickness have spared us? Is he worthy of nothing more than these shreds and patches of human obedience; this poor remnant of activity; the miserable dregs and lees of a guilty life?

"Remember then thy Creator in the days of

thy youth." If this were a call to a life of hardship and severity, still it ought not to be slighted. If the dedication of ourselves to God were a vow of separation from society; if the enjoyment of this life, and the attainment of another, were incompatible; if religion were all sacrifice and no reward, all self-denial and no indulgence, all darkness and mortification, and no light and encouragement; still, at God's command, all this ought to be endured. If this path, so thorny and narrow, leads to the glories of immortal life; if this dark and dreary avenue opens at last in the bright and sun-clad regions of the celestial country, why should we not enter it without fear, and pursue it without doubt or fainting?

But far different from this is the truth. God has mercifully connected our happiness and our duty. Religion calls for no sacrifice, which a true regard to our own well-being alone would not lead us to make. There is nothing austere or terrific in her aspect. "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "The path of the just is as a shining light." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." "For great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."

But the blessings and rewards of early piety will not be extended to yourselves alone. To say

nothing of the salutary influence of your example, think with what joy it will fill the bosom of those who gave you birth, to see your life dedicated to God and virtue. You may pay back something of the unspeakable debt of gratitude which you owe them. You may make that bosom, which has so often borne you in sickness and sorrow, throb with swelling joy; and that paternal countenance, which has always been turned on you with benignity, beam with the smiles of delighted thankfulness. Defer it—and your repentance, if it come at all, may come too late to give joy to them—too late to prevent their grey hairs from going down in sorrow to the grave.

But one consideration more, and I have done. Remember that your calculations on future life, however young you may be, are wholly precarious. Who shall tell you what a day may bring forth? Where is your charter of lengthened life? What armour of adamant have *you* to put on, which shall be proof against the dart of death? Or do you hold the pledge of the grim monarch of the tomb, that he will spare *you*, when he spares none beside? You, who presume so much on your youth, did you never hear that the budding rose might be blasted ere it could unfold its bloom? Did you never know the brightness of the morning darkened by the tempest, ere the sun had reached its noon? Does death, think you, boast no trophies, but those which he gathers from age and feebleness?

Did you never see the cheek of early beauty grow pale with disease; the nervous arm of health sink languid and lifeless; the kindling eye become dimmed and quenched; and the untimely grave open to receive the ruins of youth and hope? Ah then! presume not too much on your own exemption. Dream not that you are safe, when every step you take is fraught with danger. In these bright days of health, this fresh and sweet morning of life, listen to the voice of wisdom; give *her* thine heart, and let thine eyes observe her ways. Defer not till to-morrow your good resolutions—for that morrow may never dawn for you.

SERMON II.

PRINCIPLE OF ACTION.

HEBREWS XI. 6.

He that cometh to God, must believe that he is; and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

EVERY man, who values at all the dignity or happiness of his rational nature, would wish to pass through life with a character formed and governed by some settled and determined *principles.* A man is both contemptible and miserable, who, in the various situations in which he is called to act, has no general rule of life, no fixed maxims of conduct, to which he can appeal; whose opinions and actions vary and fluctuate with every passing event; whose mind is a mere chaos of contrary impulses and conflicting wishes; whose conduct is only a tissue of temporary expedients for the day that is passing over him; and of whose actions, therefore, in any given case, you can form no certain calculation, because they will be regulated by no principles, which the accidents of an hour may not change. They are at the mercy of every

casual impulse and event, and you can no more determine whether they will be right or wrong tomorrow, than you can predict what new shape and colour the clouds may then assume. But one, whose life proceeds on a settled *system;* whose steady principles impart their own character and complexion to the events and circumstances which occur to him; who follows a clear line of honorable conduct, at all times, and places, and seasons; such a man is ever dignified, because ever consistent; and he alone can have any claim to the name of a man of high and uniform virtue.

Since then it is so important to the dignity and perfection of our natures, that our lives should be formed on some fixed rule; the question becomes beyond measure interesting, "what that rule shall be." In order that it may be perfect, it must comply with several important conditions. It must be invariable, or else we shall sometimes be inconsistent. It must be comprehensive, or it will not embrace every case. It must apply to our conduct, not only now, but at all times; not merely to one part of our existence, but to our whole being; it must be enforced also by motives and sanctions of universal and unchanging operation.

It will be my present purpose to endeavour to show, that such a rule, enforced by adequate sanctions, can be given to us only by religion. "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek

him." This is religion in its simplest and most elementary form, as it might exist independently of any peculiar dispensation which illustrates and enforces it. God and futurity are the all comprehensive ideas which it labours to imprint on every heart. He cannot come to God, cannot be an object of the divine favour, cannot have a perfect rule of action, whose character is not formed on those principles which flow from regard to the will of the Supreme Being, and whose actions are not influenced by a consideration of the consequences which will attend them in another life. The importance, then, and necessity, of a religious principle of action, is the subject of the present discourse.

A man, whose life is not governed by a principle of religion, wants, we may say, the only genuine criterion and standard of morals, the only universal rule of virtuous conduct. I of course shall not be misunderstood to say, that such a man may not possess many amiable and admirable qualities, many kind and noble and generous affections; may not comply with all the established decencies of well-ordered society; may not be free from any just charge of doubtful integrity, of violated friendship, or neglected offices of domestic affection. Undoubtedly there are some, whose conduct puts to shame the dwarfish virtues of many a lukewarm professor. There are many, whose habits are better than their acknowledged principles, and who

living in a community where christianity has elevated and refined the public standard of morals, conform insensibly to that standard, without explicitly acknowledging its authority, even to themelves. That such men are estimable and valuable, as far as this world is concerned, I mean not to deny. They are certainly not to be confounded with the vulgar herd of trifling cavillers, and bold blasphemers. I would say only, that the virtues of such men are not founded on a *solid* and *unchangeable* basis, and they cannot be relied on in all cases as *uniform and stable ;* and they *never reach to the highest form of character* of which our nature is capable, and which he who cometh to God must possess.

What then are the rules by which a man, without a religious principle, must form his character, and govern his conduct? They must be drawn from the prevailing moral sentiments of the community of which he is a member; from that peculiar modification of them, which is called the law of honour; from a calculation of the temporal consequences of his actions; or from the dictates of a moral instinct.

With respect then to the first of these, the prevailing moral *sentiments of the community, of which we are members, as the standard of action.* It is obvious that the purity of this standard will vary greatly in different countries. Let us take one of the strongest cases which can be put—that standard as it exists in the place where we live. It may

well be doubted, whether it will be found higher and purer in any spot of equal population on the earth. The principles of religion have been so long established among us; we have so many hereditary habits of respect for them; they are presented to us every week, I trust I may on such an occasion be allowed to say it, in so much of their native simplicity and rationality; they are so publicly reverenced by the greatest and best men among us, that they certainly exert a most direct and sensible and powerful influence in giving rectitude and elevation to the public judgment of morals. A man, then, who should argue with us, from the purity and elevation of this standard, against the importance and necessity of a religious principle of action, has an advantage to which he is not fairly entitled. He ought to take the case of a community, where that religious principle, which he would discard for himself, is equally neglected by others; and this would bring him, I believe, to a state of society so corrupt, that we should hear little more of this argument.

But, granting that he has a right to take the highest and purest which he can find; the incompetency of this standard, as it is found among us, to form a character of pure and uniform and exalted virtue, is sufficiently manifest. What this standard is, must be determined, of course, not by the moral sentiments of those who are professedly governed by a religious principle, but is to be seen in the de-

gree of virtue, which a man must possess, in order not to forfeit the general estimation of those around him. Now need I remind you, how many essential defects of character he may have, without suffering this penalty? He may not only want almost all the higher virtues, he may have many positive vices. He may be profane, provided his profanity be not excessively vulgar and gross and obtrusive; he may be parsimonious, provided he be not absolutely miserly and mean; he may, to a certain point, be hard in his dealings, passionate, censorious, proud. These, and many other most serious defects of character he may have, and though he certainly will not be loved and honoured like a man of uniform christian virtue, yet he will pass on the whole for a tolerably fair character, and will not incur the loss of the general estimation of the community. Now, my friends, supposing this representation true, or any thing near the truth, will you say, that public opinion, in this or any other community that can be found, will supersede the necessity of a religious principle; will afford you a high and solid and uniform criterion of conduct; will give you principles, on which you may build a character, which we may believe God will regard with favour, and with which you will not fear to enter his presence?

2. Of that modification of public opinion, which is called *the law of honour*, I would next speak. Honour is a word of no very determinate meaning

in the mouths of most of those who use it. It is so subtle and volatile, as almost to escape the chains of definition, and it is not easy to assail an enemy so mutable in its form, and aerial in its nature. It is sometimes taken in its best sense, to signify a certain refinement and delicacy of feeling, beyond what the law of strict rectitude might appear to exact; a sensibility, and as it were polish of principle, which cannot bear the slightest soil, and which would "feel a stain, like a wound." Now, so far as this sentiment of honour coincides with the laws of virtue, it is no doubt always innocent, and to some men valuable; though it teaches nothing, I think, which is not taught with greater force by the genuine spirit of christianity. But when it is talked of as a law of conduct by itself, and a substitute for all religious principle, it must be looked into more narrowly. What then do we find it to be? As far as it is any thing definite, it seems to be a sort of tacit convention among men in refined life, to observe certain points of morality, and certain particulars of manners, in their common intercourse, with peculiar strictness, and to compensate themselves with more than a proportionate relaxation of others. A man of honour, for example, must not cheat; and, except in some cases, to one greatly inferior, must not lie. In general he must abstain from all those vices, which fashion abandons to the vulgar and low, because she can make them neither elegant nor interesting. Within these

limits he is left at liberty to lay waste the happiness of society. Honour will permit a man to neglect every duty to his God. Honour will tolerate unbounded sensuality, and the licentious indulgence of every passion. Honour will permit him to lay in the dust the purity and peace of unguarded innocence. Honour will permit, nay honour will command him to take on himself the execution of the vengeance, which belongs to God alone, and bathe his hands in an offending brother's blood. Need I ask, whether such a principle as this is a basis, on which to raise a character of exalted virtue; whether *this* is to be taken as the substitute for the eternal and unvarying rectitude of the commands of God?

3. Nor will he who discards the aid of a religious principle, be able to find a perfect rule of action in *a calculation of the temporal consequences of his conduct.* Undoubtedly a life of virtue, considered merely in relation to ourselves, and this world alone, may be proved to be the most rational and politic course of conduct. But the question is not, at present, concerning the value of such a calculation as a motive, but of its clearness, its universality and its steadiness as a rule of action. That it is deficient in all these particulars is extremely evident. The consequences of human actions are sometimes uncertain, and often remote, and it is not possible therefore in many cases for most men, and in some cases for any man, to determine what actions are,

on the whole, for his happiness. The laws of society will direct him only in a few, and those very obvious cases, of mere external conduct. Besides, although as a general calculation of interest, virtue ought to be pursued, it is not to be denied, that considered merely with relation to this world, it may sometimes appear an unprofitable course. There are occasions, when he who has no higher rule of action than self interest, may think that he ought to sacrifice his neighbour's happiness to his own. The man, therefore, who acts only on this principle, does not possess a standard of conduct, which, in opposition to all appearances, and under every change of circumstances, will keep him steady in the path of virtue. Whatever may be the general character of his actions, his rule of conduct is not founded on perfect and unchanging principles. He cannot be relied on *at all times, and in all situations*, as a man of uniform and invariable, much less of high and exalted virtue.

Neither can any substitute for the perfect will of God, as a rule of action, be found in any *moral faculty* implanted in our natures. This is not the place to discuss the question, whether the sense of right and wrong, which we possess, be an acquired principle, and liable therefore to vary with the varying influence of example, authority, education, sympathy, and habit which produce it. We may admit that it is not; and yet those with whom we reason can derive no advan-

tage from this concession. For this moral sense points out none of the duties of morality more clearly, than our duties to God. It cannot therefore be quoted by any one to justify himself in passing through life in negligence of his will. Besides, we know that in point of fact, the dictates of this faculty *have varied* in some particulars, in different ages, countries, and individuals. But above all, there is one objection which is absolutely decisive against its claims to be considered as an universal standard of conduct. This moral faculty, like any other feeling or affection, is liable to be obscured, perverted, and depraved. It cannot, therefore, furnish that perfect and never changing rule of action for which we seek. No, my friends; nothing short of an habitual conformity of our actions to the will of the Most High, will produce a character of pure and uniform morality. The will of God alone can never change. His word alone endureth forever. His law only is perfect. His testimony alone is sure.

5. Supposing however, those rules of conduct, of which I have spoken, to be perfect as far as they go, they still will never enable a man to reach the *highest order of character* of which our nature is capable, and for which it is designed, and which he who cometh to God must possess. An habitual meditation on the idea of God, and of a superintending Providence, tends to exalt and purify the character. It is an idea composed of the richest ele-

ments, embracing whatever is venerable in wisdom, awful in authority, and touching in goodness It borrows splendour from all that is fair, grows familiar with all that is great, and attracts to itself, as to a centre, whatever bears the impress of dignity, order, or happiness. The exclusion of the idea of the Supreme Being from an influence on our feelings and conduct, tends to degrade our moral sentiments, and despoil them of their dignity and lustre. Human nature will then acknowledge nothing better or higher than itself. That admiration of perfect excellence, for which we are formed, finds nothing to cherish it; and our actions sink down to the level of that standard, which we habitually contemplate.

A similar effect must follow from refusing to allow the idea of a future life to exert an influence on our feelings and principles. Whatever veils a future world from our view, and contracts the limits of existence within the present life, must tend proportionably to diminish our sense of the dignity of our nature. There must be the greatest difference between the habitual views and feelings of a man, whose hopes and fears are all suspended on the present hour, and of one who believes that he is to survive the stroke of death, and live through the ages of eternity. This difference in their views must produce a difference in the character of their most ordinary actions. It will be seen most clearly on those occasions, which call for great exer-

tions, and trying sacrifices of interest; and though it is true that these are not the ordinary business of life, yet that system is essentially defective, which leaves no room for their cultivation. At any rate, we may be sure from the mere principles of reason, that if there be verily a "God that judgeth in the earth;" they, whose characters have been formed only for this world, and this world's good, will not stand before his bar on equal terms with those, who by an habitual devotion to his will, and regard to the scenes of eternity, have prepared themselves for the society and employments of heaven.

SERMON III.

SAME SUBJECT CON TINUED.

HEB. XI. 6.

He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

THE author of the epistle to the Hebrews gives us in this passage a view of faith in its most simple and elementary form. God and futurity are represented as the great objects of it; and indeed under these comprehensive ideas, the truths which our Creator, in his various religious dispensations to mankind, has been pleased to reveal, may all be easily arranged. In discoursing from this passage in the morning, I endeavoured to show, that an habitual regard to these ideas, which constitute the essence and principle of religion, is necessary to our virtue here, and our acceptance with God hereafter. They are necessary, because without them a man must want the only genuine criterion and universal rule of virtuous conduct. Without

them his virtues cannot be founded on a solid and unchangeable basis; cannot be relied on in all cases as uniform and stable; will never reach the highest form of character of which our nature is capable, and which he who cometh to God must possess. This I endeavoured to prove, by showing the inadequacy of every rule of life, by which a man without a religious principle must form his character and govern his conduct. Let us now advance somewhat farther, and inquire, whether a man, whose actions are not influenced by a regard to the will of God, and the rewards of virtue in another life, will have any *motive* of sufficient efficacy to enforce a virtuous practice at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. The subject then of this afternoon's discourse will be the comparative value of the motives to virtue, in a man, who is governed by a religious principle, and in one who discards or neglects it as useless.

The great difficulty and task of virtue is to make the consideration of the future predominate over the perception of the present. Our mental sight deceives us with regard to the value and desirableness of present objects, in the same manner as to the eye of a child, the shrub, which springs up under his feet, appears greater than the oak, whose majestic height and spreading branches are only dimly and indistinctly seen in the distant horizon. It is the power which present appearances of good possess. the power of sense over reason,

our animal over our spiritual nature, in which the strength of all our vicious propensities consists. No man deliberately chooses evil for its own sake, or a smaller before a greater good, when they are both equally within his reach. But we every day see examples of men, who choose a good, which they confess to be inferior, momentary, and even in its consequences injurious, only because it is immediately present to their senses. The great object then of virtue, is to balance this power of present allurements, by the rewards which it promises to self-denial, and by the clearness and force, with which it unfolds them. Now, when the consideration of a religious principle is discarded, morality is evidently reduced to a mere plan or expedient, adapted to our present situation; and of course is enforced by those motives alone, which arise from the prospects and interests of the present state. What then are those motives which without a religious principle are to aid us in this contest with present objects, and to become the conquering antagonists of the power of our senses? They are to be found in the hope of estimation and distinction among men, which virtue will procure; in the intrinsic pleasures of virtue, and the pangs of remorse, which vice produces; in the temporal advantages of virtue; and its beauty, and fitness and conformity to our nature.

1. The *desire of the estimation and distinction*, which, bad as the world is, virtue will usually pro-

cure, is a real, and unquestionably a powerful, motive to its practice. It would be a fearful experiment to try how much of the virtue, that is found among us, would be withdrawn, if its influence were wholly lost. But powerful as it certainly is, its operation is both partial and inadequate. It is partial, because it extends only to those actions of which the world takes cognizance, and does not reach to many of the most essential personal virtues, and acts with greatly diminished force in the retirement of domestic life, which is after all the great theatre of virtue. It is also inadequate, because human estimation is a thing, which though a man may value, he can live without. He may persuade himself, too, that he will not incur the loss of it, by yielding to a given temptation, because crimes are usually committed under such circumstances as suggest a hope of concealment and impunity. There are some crimes also, and those too of the deepest die, which instead of forfeiting, most certainly insure a kind of estimation, which some men will highly value. Hence the necessity of a sense of an ever-present Ruler and final Judge of our actions; for it is this alone, which operates equally, at all times, and in every place; which impresses on *all* crimes, under whatever circumstances committed, the character of folly and ruin; which shows that duty and interest, however they may appear now to be separated, in every instance coincide, and that the most prosperous

career of vice, the most brilliant successes of criminality, are but an accumulation of wrath against the day of wrath.

II. Another motive to virtue, which a man without a religious principle may have, is drawn from the intrinsic *pleasures* which accompany it, and the *pangs of that remorse*, which accompanies vice.

With regard to the pleasures of virtue, every good man knows that they are real and inestimable. But this is after all an affair of feeling and of taste; and if, when you remind a man, that in breaking the laws of virtue, he gives up the greatest internal tranquillity and satisfaction, he should reply, that his taste is of a different sort; that there are other gratifications, which he values more, and that every man must chuse his own pleasures, I see not but that the argument is at an end.

Of the pangs of remorse, and the terrors of conscience, the influence is no doubt great and powerful. But then it may be fairly said that they owe their efficacy to the early-imprinted truths of religion, which no scepticism can ever completely erase. There is in the breast of every man a consciousness of the existence of unseen power; a sense of helplessness, and of dependence on superior agency; a complacency in virtue, for which his reason cannot wholly account, but which his heart cannot refuse to feel; a sense of undefined and mysterious danger in vice; and, above all, a secret dread of something after death. Now, in so far as these

feelings arise from a reference to God and a future life, they partake of the nature of religious motives, and of course cannot be brought to prove that a religious principle is unnecessary. Nothing however is more certain, than that this sensibility to virtue and vice, if left without the aid of the clear and well defined maxims of religious belief, will daily become less operative. Every sin to which we yield diminishes its power. There is even such a thing, my friends, as conscience seared as with a hot iron. It is possible to stifle all remorse for the past, all horror of the present, and all dread of the future. We may become dead in sin; and conscience, with all its terrors, may be buried in the grave of virtue. If then by the habit of sin, the power of conscience should be impaired or destroyed, how shall it be replaced? If its influence as a motive be once lost, what power shall restore it? If this lamp of God within our breasts be once extinguished, what but the hand of God can relumine it? In him, who believes that the voice of conscience is the voice of God; who believes that in another world, its decisions shall be ratified and its menaces executed—in him alone will this motive have any rational, constant, and effectual operation.

III. and IV. It remains then, for a man without a religious principle to seek his motives to virtue in a consideration of its *temporal advantages*, or in a view of its *beauty, and fitness and conformity to our nature.*

I do not think of denying, what I most sincerely believe, that the connexion between virtue and happiness is even in this world so great, that in an immense majority of cases, if not in every possible case, they may be proved to coincide. But though undoubtedly this consideration ought, and in a man of perfectly unclouded reason and obedient passions, would produce a life of virtue, the question still returns, whether in point of fact it does produce it, or whether it can reasonably be expected to have this efficacy on men as we find them. In the more refined classes of society, it will perhaps be sufficient to induce men to comply with all the common decencies of life, to obey the established laws of society, and to conform to those usages, which prescription has sanctioned. But this is all that a motive of worldly interest is capable of effecting, and much more than it will effect on a majority of mankind. It is utterly incompetent to produce any of the nobler and more elevated virtues; any thing of that grandeur of sentiment, which raises us above the low calculation of the worldly advantage; of that fortitude, and purity of purpose, which dares to displease, in order to serve you; of that integrity, which nothing can seduce, and nothing can intimidate; of that gratitude, which does not measure its returns by the extent of its obligations, but the limits of its powers; any thing in fine of that exalted love of truth and virtue, which finds in the practice of goodness itself a sufficient recompense;

which regards the triumph of him, who elevates himself by vice, as far more to be pitied, than the disgrace of him, who falls by perfidy; and which believes that all which we can suffer in this world is nothing, so long as self-reproach is not among our sufferings. To expect to find virtues of this character in a heart which was never warmed by any other influence than that of interest, is as if you should look for the rich and luxuriant products of the tropics on the frost bound plains of Siberia.

But not only is this motive inadequate to produce any of the sublimer virtues; it is very far from being a sufficient preservative from vice. I do not speak of those actions of common life, in which the passions stagnate without impulse. The time to try the efficacy of a motive is the hour of strong temptation. It is in those times, when worldly interest appears to come into collision with duty; when the practice of virtue requires the sacrifice of apparent advantage; in the moments when desire is inflamed, and passion is raging; when no eye sees you, and no tongue can proclaim your disgrace; these are the times to bring the motive to the test. It is when the clouds are gathered over the edifice, and the tempest is bursting on it, and all the winds of heaven are shaking it to its centre—this is the time to judge of the depth of its foundations, and the solidity of its pillars. And in this hour of trial, what are the supports on which the goodness of a man without a religious

principle must rest? Will you tell him of the temporal advantages of virtue? He may reply to you that he believes in the general propriety and usefulness of laws of morality, but if you show him no law-giver, who has *a right* to obedience, who will reward him if he prefer virtue to interest, and punish him if he purchase pleasure at the expense of probity, you clearly make virtue a question of mere worldly profit and loss; and if the balance in any case appears to him to be on the side of indulgence, on your own principles you are completely answered.

But you would then, perhaps, change your ground, and discourse to him on the *beauty of virtue, and its conformity to our nature.*

> "Make him hear
> Of rectitude and fitness, moral truth
> How lovely, and the moral sense how sure,
> Consulted and obeyed to guide his steps
> Directed to the first and only fair."

But if you cannot show that virtue is lovely, and true, and fit, *because God has made it so*, and connected it in another world with all that is fair and harmonious and happy, can you expect with these fine names to silence the impatient voice of appetite, subdue the wild struggles of desire, and charm the deaf serpent of passion, though you charm ever so wisely? Has man then been found so reasonable, his affections so obedient, his moral sensibility so exquisitely alive, that in the moment of fearful temptation you may expect him to

listen to the gentle whispers of unsanctioned moral sentiment? You might as well go to the sea shore, when the tempest has lashed the ocean into foam, and expect by the harmonious pleasings of a lute to lull its surges to repose.

It is then the result of our inquiries, that morals are inseparably united with religion; that they can rest securely on no other basis; and that however virtue may owe her panegyrics to reason, she must derive her authority from religion. Consider then, for a moment, some of the motives to goodness of a sincere follower of Christ. He has every motive, in its fullest strength, which may act on the man of the world; and he has others also of an infinitely higher and weightier character. He regards the laws of virtue as flowing from the will of a supreme Legislator, who is able to make, and who will make, his laws respected; he considers that he is ever under the inspection of His all-searching eye; that though he may elude the observation of man, he cannot, though he should ascend into heaven, or make his bed in hell, avoid the presence of Him, who can make the darkness of night to be light around him. All his motives to virtue, and dissuasives from vice, are dilated to unspeakable magnitude, by considering that the consequences of his actions extend beyond the present life. There is unfolded in the gospel of Christ a view of futurity, which, to him who does it justice, must annihilate the influence of every attraction to sin. He

who believes that in another world he shall behold the triumph of suffering virtue, and the abasement of successful vice, may, while such a belief is present to his mind, be assaulted by temptation in vain. Say not in opposition to this, that these motives are proved by experience to be sometimes inefficacious. They are so—and that they are so is the strongest proof of their necessity. If the virtue of him, who sees in God his creator and benefactor, the origin of all virtue's laws; who sees in Christ his redeemer and judge, who lived to illustrate, and died to enforce them; who sees in eternity the scene of his happiness or despair, accordingly as he observes or violates them; if the virtue of such a man is not safe from temptation; if it be possible to sin in the face of such motives as these, how totally insecure must he be, on whom they have never operated?

The improvement which we ought to make of these views, my friends, is to impress on our hearts the importance of a religious principle, not merely to illuminate the path of our duty, but to give strength to our steps in pursuing it. What then is the influence, which the ideas of God, and a future life have on *our* conduct? Are they as present to our thoughts as they ought to be? Do we habitually refer our actions to God's will? And is the recollection of their consequences in a future life ever present to check every tendency to sin, and animate every impulse to virtue? Surely it is be-

yond measure presumptuous for any man to refuse the light and aid of the religion of Christ, in this world of danger, temptation, and frailty. With all his supports, the best man finds the path of virtue difficult, God knows, and perilous enough. Without them, every spot on which we tread is insecure, and every step we advance we are menaced by destruction. As then you value the peace and hopes which virtue can give in this world; as you regard the favour of God, as you value his mercies, and hope for final acceptance with him, seek to impress on your hearts the eternal truth, that religion and morality are bound together in indissoluble bonds. Let us then put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil day. Then we may meet the enemies of our salvation, and fight the good fight of faith unshaken, unseduced, unterrified. And when at last the struggle is over with us, Heaven will open wide her ever during gates to receive us, and we shall be welcomed to the joy of our Lord.

SERMON IV.

GOVERNMENT OF THE THOUGHTS.

PSALM CXXXIX. 23, 24.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

WHATEVER theory may be formed to account for the progress of the gospel, it will at least be admitted that it owes none of its success to flattering the passions, or coinciding with the vicious propensities, of mankind. The requisitions of the gospel every where display the most high and austere and unaccommodating purity. In the systems of most of the ancient moralists, even when there was no intention of making any compromise with the vicious inclinations of the human heart, the utmost that was proposed was to regulate the *actions* of mankind. But the Master whom we serve, exercises a sublimer and more extensive jurisdiction over his followers. His empire is universal. It controuls every faculty of our minds, and is to be felt in the

inmost recesses of our hearts. His religion does not merely restrain our external actions, it penetrates where no human eye can follow it, and regulates the secret workings of our very *thoughts*.

And herein is illustrated that profound and intimate knowledge of human nature, on which the precepts of him "who knew what is in man," are all built. To impose any restriction on the thoughts, might at the first view appear to be severe and cruel, and an unnecessary abridgment of the scanty stock of our harmless pleasures. What is so free, it may be said, as thought, and what so innocent, as long as our actions are right, as to suffer our thoughts to range without controul? But our Saviour knew that it was in vain to prohibit actions, as long as the thoughts are suffered to rove at liberty; to attempt to check the flowing of the stream, when the fountain itself is open and unrestrained. The connexion between thought and action is so intimate and unavoidable, that in its most extensive sense, it may be said, that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. The gospel therefore requires the government of the thoughts, not merely as a useful, but an indispensable discipline; not merely as auxiliary to the higher virtues of the christian character, but as altogether necessary to preserve us from the dominion of our sinful propensities. It does not teach us to wait for sin till it is strong and flourishing, but commands us to root up its seeds as they are bursting into life. It

carries order and discipline into our very fancies and conceptions, and by hallowing the first shadowy notions of the minds from which actions spring, makes our actions themselves good and holy.

I propose to occupy your time to day, in attempting to illustrate the *importance* and *practicability* of the government of the thoughts. In illustrating its importance, I shall endeavour in the first place to show that the discipline of our thoughts is necessary to the full and successful exertion of our *mental powers;* secondly, that it is necessary to our *happiness*, and to fit us for the scenes and duties of actual life; thirdly, that it is necessary to our *virtues*, and consequently to our everlasting well being.

I. It is necessary that our thoughts should be under regular discipline, in order to the full and successful exertion of our mental powers. What is called a vigorous and active mind seems, after all, to mean only a mind, of which the thoughts are all subjected to the authority of its governing powers, and may therefore all be brought to bear, with their whole force, on the business in which it is occupied. Attention seems only another name for that state of mind, when all its thoughts are fixed and collected, and bent to a single point; and it is a power of attention, much more than any original and native diversity of talents, which constitutes the intellectual difference among men. Newton was accustomed to declare, that if he differed from his fellow men, he owed it to his power of patient

meditation; in other words to his power of fixing his thoughts intently and long on any subject with which he was occupied. We must have all observed the truth of these remarks in the course of our various pursuits. If we examine our minds at those periods when they are most vigorously and successfully exerted, we shall observe that all other objects are excluded from our minds, and that our thoughts are concentrated and engrossed by the task in which we are employed. If on the contrary we observe ourselves when our minds are indisposed, reluctant and inefficient, we shall find that our dominion over our thoughts is lost, that attention is dissipated and distracted by a multitude of unrelated images, which float through the fancy, and that all our powers are weakened, because discordant and divided. The effect of suffering our thoughts to wander without guidance and without object is too obvious to have escaped the most careless observer. It breaks up all our habits of regular inquiry, indisposes us for any thing which requires seriousness and patience, and especially unfits us for meditation on divine things, which from their nature the mind is with so much difficulty brought steadily to contemplate. If then we desire to effect any thing valuable in this short life; if we seek to use our talents according to the purposes of the Giver; if we would improve our own minds for the service of God, and the scenes of eternity; and contribute what we can, to the hap-

piness and improvement of our fellow men, we must learn to control our thoughts, restrain our vain and wandering imaginations, and seek to make the proper business of life in our various callings, and the duties of devotion at their appointed seasons, fill and occupy our minds.

II. That our thoughts should be brought under discipline, is necessary, in the second place, for our happiness in actual life, and to fit us for its common scenes and duties. A great deal of misery is produced, particularly among those, who have no absorbing occupation, and those in whom the illusions of youth have not been corrected by the experience of actual life, by indulging the imagination in forming schemes and hopes of visionary felicity; or as it is sometimes called, "building castles in the air." It is indeed very delightful to give the reins to the thoughts, to send fancy on the wing from this world of imperfection and pain, and sorrow and sin, to scenes where every thing is perfect, happy and fair; where nature wears an eternal bloom, where the skies are always blue, and the winds always balmy; where children are always virtuous, friends never faithless, and fortune is never fickle; where the eye knows no tear, and the heart no pang.

But this is not life as we must expect to find it. This is not the world in which we are to live, and in which we are to act. It is not intended that this state of trial should ever realize such dreams

of fancy. And the effects of indulging this luxury of vain imagination are neither salutary nor innocent. If we could descend, indeed, from these airy fabrics of unreal felicity, and return as before to the common duties of life, the harshest epithet which we could apply to this employment would be, that it was useless. But both our happiness and our fitness for our duties are lessened by it. When we awake from these delusions, we feel the full force of the contrast betweenwhat we see and what we have imagined. The scenes and duties of common life appear tame and insipid, after gazing on the beautiful creations of fancy. The effects on the mind are precisely similar to those produced by works of fiction, except that in this case we read merely the fiction of another, and in that, we make the romance for ourselves; and are therefore more in danger of mistaking it for reality. The realities of life must always fall far short of the pictures of fancy. When we descend from the lofty regions where in imagination we have been dwelling, and are called on to perform the common place duties of good husbands, and wives, and fathers, and children, and citizens, which of course can very seldom call us to feel much either of rapture or of anguish, we miss the strong stimulus to which our passions have been accustomed. We find that we have been nourishing a sickly and fastidious delicacy, which revolts at the plain and homely, and sometimes coarse and

disgusting employments, to which we are destined. A spirit of discontent and unhappiness is apt to spring up. We lose our cheerful acquiescence in the purposes of Providence, and our ready submission to that wisdom which always decides best for us.

I do not say that this is always the effect of any degree of indulgence of these vain thoughts, but it is the tendency of it, and therefore it is that we must seek to banish them. We must refuse ourselves the luxury of solitary musing, and building castles in the air, and let hope and fancy and memory be regulated by reason and religion. Our expectations from life must become accommodated to its true state. We must be contented with the mixture of good and evil as it has been mingled for us, and not expect that we are born, with a peculiar destiny, to a happiness and perfection which is denied to others. If indeed it were nothing more than an unprofitable waste of time, that alone would be reason enough to confine this dissipation of thought, and restrain its irregularities. Enough surely of life is spent unprofitably, without giving any of the little, which remains, to the delusions of visionary happiness.

III. But the necessity of regulating our thoughts will appear more serious, when we consider their influence on our moral character. All action has its origin in the mind. The thought is the rudiment of the deed. Meditation produces desire,

and desire leads to practice. If then we would have our actions right, we must make our thoughts pure, and learn to forbear to think on what we are forbidden to do.

The manner in which evil thoughts are connected with bad actions is obvious. There is no one, who is yet innocent, who is not shocked by the idea of crimes, when they appear in all their magnitude and deformity. No one ever leaped over the limits of virtue into the confines of confirmed vice, at a single bound. On the contrary, the exclamation, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing," is the natural impulse of every man's mind, whose conscience is yet unseared, at the very suggestion of atrocious guilt. But by revolving with pleasure the safety, facility, or advantages, of a wicked deed, he finds his constancy waver, his resolution relax, his detestation soften. The idea of some fraudulent stratagem or scene of guilty pleasure, which at first perhaps was admitted into the mind from curiosity merely, is next regarded with complacency; comes at length to be cherished with fondness; at last assumes the form of desire; and how nearly allied is desire to transgression, there are too many of us, alas, who know! What we allow ourselves to wish, we are soon induced to attempt to gain. He who suffers his thoughts and wishes to dwell too long on the pleasures and advantages which he should derive from what another possesses, will begin to reconcile his mind to

some unlawful measure for procuring it. He, who suffers his imagination to be filled with images of guilty and degrading pleasure, will at length find his desire irresistibly stimulated to gratification. Every moment spent in meditation on sin increases its dangerous power over us, till at length the idea of pleasure overcomes the sense of guilt; the last limit of innocence is, though perhaps timidly and reluctantly, past—we enter into the confines of sin—it may be, never to return.

We are thus irresistibly led to the conclusion, that he who would govern his actions by the laws of virtue, must regulate his thoughts by those of reason and religion. It is not possible that a man should walk outwardly in the law of God, who is constantly feeding his imagination with the pleasures of sin. The passions will at last act. It is difficult to stop when we have inflamed ourselves with every possible incentive to advance; to abstain, when appetite is sharpened to its keenest edge. Of what therefore we are forbidden to do, we must learn to forbid ourselves to think; and make the propriety of action a test of the propriety of thought. If it is wrong to gratify revenge, it is wrong to dwell on it in imagination. If we must resist the allurements of pleasure, we must refuse to contemplate them. We must not seek to indemnify ourselves for the restraints which we impose on our actions, by the sinful indulgences of imagination. There must be no discor-

dance between the inward and outward man; thought, word, and deed, must be constantly and inseparably united.

Let us then seek to lay the foundation of virtue deeply and permanently in holy thoughts; and keep the recesses of the heart pure from the intrusion of guilt. It is easy to stifle vice, while it yet exists half formed and immature in the thoughts; but if we suffer it to live there, and gather strength, it will at length become too powerful for our controul, and sting the unguarded bosom which has fostered and cherished it. We must hold no parley with sin, if we would not become its victim and its slave. Say not that it is safe merely to listen to sin; that there can be no harm in merely suffering our thoughts to gaze upon it; we can still always deny; we can always retreat, when we please; we still remain masters of our actions. My friends, we deceive ourselves. All that sin asks of us, is to think of it. It is madness to contend on equal terms with the eloquence of passion. She will first charm you to silence, then deceive your reason into conviction, and then lead you utterly from God. There is no safety but in eternal and irreconcilable war with it.

To meditate on sin is the more dangerous, because it may be indulged in the deepest solitude, where it escapes the awe of observation, and the restraints of public opinion. The undermining process of internal corruption may be secretly go-

ing on in the mind, while all without appears lovely, innocent, and pure. We are called on, therefore, by our love of openness, and detestation of hypocrisy, to make the thoughts of our minds correspond to the external character of our actions, to disdain to display one character to the world, and have another in the secret places of the heart; to be unwilling to owe our estimation among men only to their ignorance of the real state of our desires. A good man will seek to have his thoughts and actions one; to own a heart so pure, as that he may be able to defy the keenest inquisition of the human race.

There remains yet a more solemn consideration. It is, that however we may succeed in concealing our thoughts from the world, there is an eye which constantly fastens its observations on us, to which the darkness and the light are both alike, and which can pierce the thickest veil with which we cover our hearts. We may deceive our fellow men, but God we cannot deceive; and "He will bring into judgment every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

SERMON V.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

PSALM CXXXIX. 23, 24.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

NOTHING at first view may seem more wholly placed beyond control than the thought of man. It not only escapes all external power and authority; but it is not even restrained within the limits of nature and reality. No bounds can be set to its excursions. It passes in a moment from earth to heaven, numbers the stars, weighs their masses, traces their courses and predicts their revolutions. While the body is confined to a single planet, along which it creeps with pain and difficulty, thought can at once transport us into the most distant parts of the universe, or even into the illimitable regions of space. The conception of the mind outruns incalculably the performance of the hand, and we can contrive in minutes, what we can only slowly execute in years.

To confine within rules a power so restless and excursive might seem at first too hard a task to be attempted. Yet it is a command of the gospel of Christ, that we should confine its wanderings and repress its irregularities; and we may be sure, that whatever God has made necessary, he has also made possible. It is a command which is founded on the most deep and intimate knowledge of the moral nature of man. The connexion between thought and action is so unavoidable, that if the propensities of our nature are to be subjected to regulation at all, the check must be laid on the thought, or it will be in vain to prohibit the action. If to regulate the thoughts be impossible, then is virtue itself impracticable; and to call on us to obey its laws is only cruel and insulting mockery. But this we know to be false. The consciousness of responsibility is written on the human heart, in characters too deep and lasting to be argued away by any sophistry; and if we are commanded to regulate the thoughts, He who gives the command, will give also the power of obedience. For every temptation with which we can be assailed in the world, there is a power within us, greater and mightier than that temptation. We have reason, to discern between good and evil, both in their present and remote consequences. We have freedom to resolve, we have conscience and revelation to teach us what to resolve, and we may have, if we ask it, the

grace of God, and his protecting spirit, to sanctify all the good which we desire and intend.

I endeavoured this morning to impress on you the importance of governing the thoughts, by showing, in the first place, its necessity to the full and successful exertion of our mental powers; in the next place to our happiness here, and our fitness for the scenes and duties of actual life; and thirdly to our virtue, and consequently to our everlasting well-being. I shall now endeavour to illustrate the practicability of this duty, and point out some of the means, which may assist us in performing it.

We must begin by conceding, that perhaps no man can so wholly regulate attention by his will, that his ideas shall always come and go exactly at his command. There is a constant succession of thoughts, an ever-changing current of ideas, passing through the mind, by which our past sensations and impressions, combined and compounded in innumerable ways, present themselves to the attention. This train of our ideas, as it is called, is so far involuntary, that it proceeds, like the act of breathing, without the necessary concurrence of our will, and must be in perpetual motion, whether we sleep or wake, whether we observe or neglect it. We cannot by any effort of mind altogether stop its course; as any one will perceive, who shall attempt, even for a few moments, to exclude every thought from his mind. He will speedily find, that in spite of himself, a

variety of ideas of whatever he may have felt or done in life, will present themselves unbidden to his memory. This involuntary recurrence of our ideas undoubtedly proves so much as this, that the mere entrance of a wicked imagination into the mind is not in itself criminal.

> Evil into the mind of God or man
> May come and go, *so unapproved*, and leave
> No spot or stain behind.

But though we cannot absolutely forbear to think of something, this train of our ideas by no means proceeds in an arbitrary and unconnected manner, and is far from being independent of our control. Though the mind cannot indeed be left wholly vacant of thought, it rests with us to determine what *kind* of thoughts shall occupy it. We may arrest any idea we choose, in its course through the mind, dwell upon it, expand it, and call up and arrange a multitude of others related to it. Just so far as this power is lost, reason itself is eclipsed. It is this which enables us to think connectedly and long on any subject that we choose to contemplate, and to determine the class and colouring of the ideas which shall occupy our attention. It in effect amounts to a power of excluding from our minds any thought, which we may be unwilling should enter it. For though we cannot by a direct and despotic effort of will banish any idea, which presents itself, we can indirectly exclude it, by giving the mind another direction. That is to say,

we may prevent the entrance of wrong ideas into the mind, by always keeping it full of those which are right. No man, perhaps, in this world, we must allow, possesses this power in a perfect degree. But a good man is continually making approaches to it. His efforts are constantly aided by the law of habit, by which the yoke of our duties is made each day more easy, and their burthen more light; the force of temptation diminished, the power of resistance increased; till at length, we can conceive of a mind so perfectly governed, that not a thought shall find its way into it, which the God of purity himself might not approve.

I fear, my friends, lest a subject, in itself simple, may have been made obscure by my endeavours to explain it. I mean merely to insist on the fact, which remains a fact whether we succeed in explaining it or not, that we have the power of determining the direction, which our thoughts shall take; and that if evil thoughts gain a permanent possession of our minds, it is because we voluntarily cherish and invite them, or at least do not use our best efforts to exclude them. On this subject it is safe to make an appeal to experience. Ask of any man, who has been drawn into crimes, and he will tell you how easily he might have at first repelled the temptation; how readily his mind would have obeyed a call to another object; how weak the allurement became while he was engaged in any regular occupation, till he has permitted his thoughts and wishes again to fix and fasten on it,

and suffered the dangerous eloquence of the senses to rouse his passions into activity.

The fact then, that the government of the thoughts is *practicable*, may, I think be safely assumed as incontestible; and I shall employ the time which remains, in suggesting some of the means, which will assist us in bringing them under regulation.

The first means which I shall suggest for the regulation of the thoughts, and that indeed without which all others are ineffectual, is a steady and systematic employment of our time; a vigorous exercise of our faculties in some useful occupation. A great part of the wretchedness of human life, we all know, proceeds from the want of something to do. But this is not the worst effect of idleness. It is impossible that we should long be unemployed, and keep our innocence. The mind, at least in its waking hours, can never cease to think; and if it be not thinking of something useful and good, it will intallibly soon be occupied with what is pernicious and sinful. The demons of temptation always hover round a vacant, listless, and unoccupied mind, and mark it for their prey. In the shape of evil thoughts they tyrannize over the mind like the fabled seducer of our first mother. They fill it with

> "Illusions, as they list, phantoms and dreams
> Distempered, discontented thoughts,
> Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desire,
> Blown up with high conceits engendering pride."

Next in their effects to idleness, are those trifling and insipid occupations, which take no permanent hold on the attention. To do any thing, indeed, that is innocent, is better than absolute sloth, and a free permission of the thoughts to wander where they please. But it is the duty of every Christian man to propose to himself some high and useful object to live for, some end that is worthy of the pursuit of an immortal being. We may always find in the cultivation and enlargement of our moral and intellectual powers; in the duties of our calling; in the care of those entrusted to us; in seeking that our fellow men may be made good and wise, that God may be honoured, that the blessings of the gospel may be diffused; the best security for the holiness of our thoughts, and the innocence of our lives. But at all events let us never permit ourselves to be idle while there is any thing, that is not criminal, to be done. At the first approach of evil thoughts, let us force ourselves to toil, and however reluctant the mind may be, still bind it down to its task. By God's grace, nothing that is necessary for us is impracticable, and with every temptation, if we are true to ourselves, he will make a way for our escape.

A second aid to assist us in the regulation of our thoughts, is a constant use of the means of religion, and particularly of prayer. Reading the scriptures, attendance on the ordinances of religion, every thing which increases our belief in the doc-

MA-
hereby
d Insur-
DINGS,
l rate of
Bo
S.
60

trines and promises of the gospel, must be powerful instruments to assist us in withstanding the temptation of vain thoughts and unholy desires. "It is faith," says St. Paul, "which quenches the fiery darts of the devil;" "which overcomes the world," says St. John. It is a breastplate, and a shield. By faith God is pleased; by faith we are sanctified; by faith we are saved; and faith, we are told, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. And if we listen to the result of the experience of those, who have longest fought the good fight of faith, they will tell us, that among the most effectual and certain means of resisting the irruption of unholy thoughts into the mind, is humble and hearty prayer. "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," is not only the genuine language of devotion, but the language also of a mind, that had known the power of temptation, and knew also where to fly for refuge. Our security from sin must be always placed in a humble sense of our own weakness, and a consciousness that we need the divine assistance. Let us then live much in communion with God; and from every blessing, suffering, and fall, take occasion to breathe our gratitude, submission, and penitence. This is to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. And we may always have this confidence, that God never deserts the humble

jun
E. COL. tinue in this city. Purchase sale AND,

and contrite spirit, which in the hour of peril pours forth its fervent prayer to him.

Another means to assist us in bringing our thoughts under a regular and salutary discipline, is to cherish an habitual sense of the ever during presence of God, and a dread of laying open to his pure inspection a soul filled with carnal and voluptuous thoughts. Let us remember that the same God, who dwelleth above, hath his ways upon the earth; that he not only numbereth the sanctities of heaven, but knoweth the thoughts of man; that he not only walketh, where the planets wander, but searcheth the secret places of the heart. Let us seek to have a deep impression of his character and perfections, and we shall find every new view of his glory to be leading us on to love, imitation and obedience. Let us remember that his pure and holy law punishes the adultery of the heart, condemns the malice of the thoughts, and ordains that all our outward and visible virtue should be the faithful sign of inward and spiritual purity.

We shall find, in the fourth place, that the greatest aid in excluding vain and wicked thoughts from the mind, is to fix our contemplations on the eternal world. Let us think of the shortness of life, and the vanity of its pleasures and pursuits; of the certainty of death and judgment; of the glories of heaven, and of the wretchedness of impenitent guilt. These are the thoughts which will

quell the power of temptation, and subdue the madness of passion; and with which nothing unholy and impure will dare to intermingle. Let us then think of the world, where our Redeemer has his abode; where God unveils his glorious face; where are the spirits of just men made perfect; and where the irreclaimably wicked cannot come.

The consideration of the eternal connexion between holiness and happiness, sin and misery, if it be brought home to the mind, must surely secure it from the intrusion of every vain and criminal imagination. An internal principle of purity will impart its steady character and unvarying complexion to all our actions. One victory over sin will ensure another. We shall meet temptation accustomed to vanquish it, and come off conquerors, and more than conquerors, over our spiritual foes. And when at the last great day of account, we stand in the presence of our God, we shall meet him with well grounded confidence and hope. We shall find that we have not toiled in vain; that we have not fixed our thoughts on heaven, and kept the faith in vain; but that a crown of glory is reserved for us, which cannot fade away.

SERMON VI.

TRANSIENT RESOLUTION.

PHILIPPIANS, IV. 1.

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

This affectionate exhortation of the Apostle to constancy and perseverance in the christian profession, was rendered peculiarly necessary by the circumstances of his early converts. It was addressed to men, who, in embracing christianity, had exposed themselves to some of the heaviest of earthly evils. They were the objects of the scorn and hatred of their fellow-men; and were not merely obliged to renounce the hope of fortune and fame, but to be prepared to endure persecution, and, it might be, death itself, in the cause of Christ. The temptation to be false to their religious obligations under these circumstances, or at least so far to relax them as that they might be restored to the favour of the world, was very

great; and the Apostle, knowing the weakness of our frail nature, could not but tremble for the steadfastness of his converts, for whose conversion he had laboured with so earnest and pure a zeal, and whose faith in the gospel was the glory and solace of his ministry. His warm and affectionate heart, filled with a sense of their danger, pours itself out in the words of our text. "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

The circumstances of believers at the present day no doubt are greatly changed. To be thought a sincere, uniform, unaffected, exemplary christian, so far from being a disgrace, is among us a title to confidence and respect. Still, however, the exhortation of the Apostle has not become superfluous. The sources from which our temptations to wavering and inconstancy in the christian profession arise, are different, it is true, but they are not less real, nor less dangerous. We see too many examples of infirmity of christian purpose; we feel, if we know anything of our own hearts, too many seductions from the path of our christian duty; not to acknowledge that we need often to be reminded of our danger, and earnestly exhorted to "stand fast" in our christian profession. Let us then review at this time some of the causes of our inconstancy in religious resolutions, and some of the cautions and counsels which our danger should suggest.

I. The first cause, which I shall mention, and that to which perhaps all others might be reduced, is a want of a proper impression of the importance of the christian character. If we constantly felt, as we ought to feel, the necessity of being what the gospel requires us to be, we should need no exhortations to steadfastness and perseverance in our christian calling. To be a christian, that is to say, to be virtuous in the christian sense of virtue, is not a thing that is simply useful, or simply ornamental. It is essential. Heaven, and God's eternal favour, are suspended on it. I speak of those who live in a christian land, and enjoy the means of christian knowledge and the opportunities of christian improvement. I refer not to their case who are denied these privileges, nor to that of those who from causes distinct from their own perversity or negligence, are incredulous as to its claims. But I speak of those who have it within their power to understand the nature and authority of the gospel; to them, I say, it is a thing absolutely essential to become, and to continue Christians. "It is not a vain thing; it is your life." This is saying no more of christianity than this; that it was not a matter of indifference whether God gave it to us or not. It is saying only, that Jesus Christ did not come into the world, and lay down his life, for a matter of little moment. It is simply asserting, that if it is true that we have in the gospel a revelation of the will of God, and a certain state of the mind

and heart is there declared to be such as He requires in order to admission to his favour, then it is of the last importance, that we should comply with this condition. There is no object on earth to be compared in value for a moment with this "pearl of great price."

But though this statement of the importance of the christian character will hardly be objected to in theory, it is not always practically felt, as it ought to be, by those who take the name of christians, and enter on the obligations of a religious life. There are many who content themselves with very slight and superficial notions on this subject. They are christians, because they have a general belief that christianity is of divine origin, and a prevailing impression that it is creditable, desirable, and safe, to be numbered among believers. While therefore the gospel interferes not much with their favourite pursuits, they continue sufficiently steady in its outward profession. But they feel very imperfectly its controlling and sanctifying power. It occupies only a subordinate place in their thoughts. Their hearts' best and warmest affections are given to other objects. Instead of seeking first and chiefly the kingdom of God and his righteousness, they desire to be first rich, then holy; first learned, then good; first great and elevated, then pure and devout; they would first exhaust the world, and then they will be ready to turn their affections supremely on heaven. With so divided an empire, or ra-

ther with so subordinate a rule in the breast, it is evident that what influence religion possesses must always be insecure. When it comes in competition with the riches, pleasure, or power, which they pursue as the first and chief ends of life, it is found unequal to the contest. If one or the other must be given up, it is their character and hopes as christians, which they feel they can best spare. If we look over the melancholy list of those, who have sacrificed the religion which they once embraced, we shall find that their apostacy is to be traced, more than to any other cause, to a want of a profound and practical conviction of its supreme importance.

II. Another cause of infirm and transient religious resolutions, is an imperfect knowledge of the nature of the Christian character. We do not study the requirements of the gospel in their full extent; the labour and vigilance which its duties require; the difficulties and discouragements which it may call us to encounter. It too often happens that the Christian profession is entered on without counting its cost, without weighing its consequences. The fabric that is raised is tottering and insecure, because the foundation on which it stands is not laid broad and deep. I speak of the case of those who begin a religious course under some temporary excitement, and not from a full and solemn and well-meditated conviction. The truth, beauty, and value of religion, have sometimes, perhaps,

struck their minds with a peculiar force. They are interested in some discourse which they have heard, or some book which they have read; and some salutary compunctions, some good resolutions, enter their minds. Or it may be that affliction has made their hearts tender, and retirement has collected their thoughts and given birth to good meditations. They open their subdued and softened spirits to the gracious promises of the gospel; and they feel for the time that the vanities of life are worthless, and that God and holiness are their supreme good. They resolve to change what is wrong in their course of life. They will think habitually of their destination. They will devote themselves to the gospel, and adorn the profession of their faith. Alas, that so fair a prospect should ever be clouded. Sad indeed if these shoots of piety so green and vigorous should ever languish and fade, and leave nothing to be seen, but the withered remains of too hasty good intentions! But so it is; when we act only under a momentary excitement, when we have only indistinct and unsatisfactory notions of religion, when there has been no faithful examination of the nature and extent of its duties, our christian resolutions must always be insecure. We may find the work of reformation harder than we thought; the denial of our appetites, the control of our passions, the discipline of our affections, the regulation of our thoughts, feelings and habits, may be found unex-

pectedly arduous; and our resolutions if taken without any foresight of these difficulties, may falter and give way. They, who had expected to find no obstacles in their path, are checked and shaken by the first impediments. The first flame of persecution scorches them; indifference chills them; ridicule abashes, temptation seduces them; and the sacrifices which conscience calls on them to make, they find to be greater than they can afford.

III. A third cause of infirmity of christian purpose, is a want of a proper knowledge of ourselves. We may have thought of the importance, and may be acquainted with the duties of the christian profession, without having sufficiently considered our own preparation for them. We set out in the christian race with too much confidence; with an over-estimate of our strength. We have not thought of the deceitfulness of our hearts, the extent of our corruptions, the power of our passions and lusts, the number and strength of our tendencies to sin, and our need of perpetual humility and vigilance. This is a danger to which the young are peculiarly exposed. They may engage in a religious course with this false opinion of their own strength, and set out with alacrity and zeal, and for a while press forward with vigour and success. But as they advance with little caution and self examination, they find that the germs of passion, concealed in their minds, are quickened in-

to life and strength. They find the allurements of guilty pleasure more powerful than they dreamed they could be. Fashion makes them her slave. Dissipation swallows up their affections. Their sense of religion is insensibly diminished; its duties grow irksome and distasteful; they become lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Or if they escape the dangers of youthful lusts, they may be overpowered by the "masterless passions" of riper years. The cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, the fondness for show, and the passion for honour, all spring up in the mind to choke the word, and render it fruitless. They are not armed against these dangers, because they had presumptuously believed that they were proof against their power. Their resolution melts, when they discover the hardness which a good soldier of Christ is called to endure, in his conflict with his internal foes. Their diligence gradually relaxes. They fall away—and religion weeps over her weak and degenerate children, while sin, with smiles of triumph, spreads out her hundred arms, to embrace again the returning slaves of her tyranny.

IV. Another, and the last cause of infirm and transient resolutions which I shall at present mention, is the false security into which many christians are apt to fall. The folly of desisting too soon from successful labours, and the haste of enjoying advantages before they are secured, are as often fatal in religion as they are in the common pursuits of life.

It is too common for those who have begun and prosecuted a successful course of religion, to imagine that they have attained enough of perfection; that their religious habits have become established and secure; that they are beyond the danger of falling; and that they may now sit down in the peaceful enjoyment of their religious acquisitions. They forget that the warfare of a christian lasts for life. They forget that even the Apostle Paul himself thinks it necessary to say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. I count not myself to have apprehended, but forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." They forget all this, and while they sleep in security, the fabric of their christian character is silently undermined. They allow themselves in petty deviations from the strict path of duty. They lose that salutary timidity which made them dread to sully the purity of their virtue by the slightest stain. Perhaps without perceiving themselves when it was that their religious ardor first began to forsake them, they grow gradually cold, and negligent, and insensible, and at length become alienated from the life of God.

Such are some of the dangers of want of perseverance in our religious resolutions. Let the consideration of them teach us a lesson of seriousness, of caution, of watchfulness, and humility

Let us seek to settle in our minds, on entering a religious course, a deep conviction of the importance of the christian character. Let us remember that as Christ is true, and God is faithful, this character is essentially connected with our eternal well being. Let this conviction lead us to the conscientious use of all the means and instruments of holy living which the gospel reveals. Let us often weigh the nature and obligations of a religious life. We are not indeed to take overstrained and extravagant views of human duty, but it is reasonable that we should remember, that to form so great and glorious a character, as that of a true christian, must be a work of labour and care, blessed by the spirit of God. It is impossible, that such a thing should be a cheap attainment. Let us look steadily in the face of all the difficulties and discouragements, which beset the christian's path, and count fairly the cost of our religious engagements. Let us be on our guard against the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and never forget our liability to fall. Let us lay the foundation of the christian character in a deep humility; and at no period of life, neither in the innocence of youth, nor the confidence of manhood, nor the stability of old age, let us think the work of religion done; never let us imagine that we have no longer any need to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation.

In the representation which has now been given of the difficulties of a religious life, and the dan-

gers to which our good resolutions are exposed, there may be some who will find an excuse for hesitation and delay. Who, they may ask, is sufficient for these things; who but must shrink from the fearful hazards of declension and apostacy from their plighted resolutions? But though I cannot conceal from you, and would not lessen in your eyes, the duties, the responsibility, and the dangers, of a christian profession, I am sure, that if you examine the subject as you ought, you will find from it motives to quicken you, rather than arguments to excuse and encourage delay, in the performance of your duties as believers in Christ. True, there is danger that your resolutions, if you form them, may be unstable and transitory, but there is danger also, and the greatest danger, if you form them not. Will his condition be worse, think you, who has attempted to do his duty and failed, than his, who has voluntarily and wholly neglected it? Will he fall under a heavier condemnation, who has sincerely and conscientiously entered on a course which he believes to be right, even though he may not pursue it always with the same vigour, than he will, who with a bold impiety turns away from the course of duty, and is deaf to the invitations of his Saviour?

But this danger of infirm and transient resolutions, which deters you, is not such as need to alarm you, if your heart be humble, your watchfulness unintermitted, and your prayers to God

sincere and persevering. He will vouchsafe to you all the aid you ask. You do not serve a hard and inexorable master. He measures our characters by our endeavours, more than by our success. He knows our frame; He remembers we are but dust. No sincere endeavour, no humble desire, no virtuous exertion, is ever lost with him. He forgives the weakness which cleaves to our poor natures, when he sees that we struggle against it, and that our prevailing desire is to please Him, and conform to the gospel of his Son. You have no ground for depressing apprehension in the service of such a master, and no just excuse for neglecting or delaying to obey his commands. Be exhorted then, my friends, you who have never yet entered with resolution on a religious life, and dedicated yourselves to God; be intreated to taste and see that the Lord is gracious. And you, my beloved brethren, who own the sway of our merciful Prince and Saviour; who have enrolled yourselves as servants of the cross, as aspirants after the purity and happiness of heaven; you, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and my crown, may God enable you ever to stand fast in the Lord, and thus to make your calling and election sure.

SERMON VII.

LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

ROM. XIII. 9.

And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Of those dazzling qualities, which receive most of the world's admiration, it has pleased the Almighty Disposer to make an unequal distribution among his creatures. And if it is right that we should exist in this world in a state of trial and discipline, it seems impossible that this inequality of advantages should be wholly avoided. Many temptations, in resisting which the purity of a good character is most displayed, and many virtues of the fairest form and highest dignity, owe their existence wholly to that state of things, which is produced by this unequal distribution.

But though for wise purposes, God permits this inequality to exist, yet even in this world, there are some things, which tend to reduce it within

narrower limits than we might at first suppose. The advantages of wealth, and power, and knowledge, may be measured out to different men in very unequal portions. But there is one distinction, and that too of the highest lustre, which is equally open to the attainment of all; I mean that which is given by the possession of a benevolent heart. You may not be able to follow one man in the eagle flight of his genius; you cannot perhaps aspire to that dignity and preeminence to which the wisdom of another is justly entitled; you cannot vie with a third in opulence and splendour, or in that power of doing good which is given to him by his wealth. But there is one thing in which, humble though you may be in your powers, and restricted in your means, there is one thing in which you may yet equal, nay, surpass them all. It is in being delighted to contemplate, and as far as in your power to increase, the happiness of others. Nor will any one think this quality unimportant, who observes the dignity which is attached to it in every page of the gospel. It is one of the two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets. It is the virtue, which under the name of benevolence, or love to our neighbour, implies all others. It is the charity without which we are nothing; the charity which never fails; which when the gems of monarchs shall grow dim, and the laurel of earthly renown shall wither, will still endure in undecaying lustre; the charity,

which when faith itself shall be lost in sight, and hope be swallowed up in fruition, shall still survive, and constitute the happiness of heaven itself.

Let us give our present attention to the nature, extent, and limitations, of this all important virtue, and to the motives which we have to attempt its acquisition.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This statement of the doctrine of benevolence, like all the precepts of our Lord, is admirably simple, comprehensive, and practicable. He does not tell us to fix our affections on an abstract and metaphysical idea of "being in general." Nor does he, with those in modern days who have attempted to improve on his precepts, confound the motive with the rule and criterion of action, and destroy all the particular affections toward father, brother and friend, by telling us that in every action we are to be governed by a consideration of its effects on the general good of the whole human race. Nor does he, with other moralists, narrow virtue to the mere love of country, or an exclusive attachment to our relatives and friends. But a rule is given of universal application, which extends to every possible case, and comes home at once to the feelings and comprehension of every man. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour;" that is, your love must commence with that part of mankind, with that part of your country, which comes within the sphere of your influence.

The nature and extent of this affection are determined by the words of the precept with the greatest precision. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour." If any one should ask what is the nature of this love, he is only to appeal to his own feelings; and whatever he would esteem an act of love from his neighbour towards him, that is precisely the kind of love which he is to exercise towards his neighbour. If he need any farther commentary, let him read the touching and inimitable tale of the good Samaritan; and he will learn who it is that is his neighbour, and what is the kind of love which he is to exercise. If then he should ask, what is the extent and degree of this love, he will find the limitations of the rule in its own words; "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In the first place let it be observed, you are not required to love your neighbour *more* than yourself. Some degree of self love the precept evidently supposes necessary and justifiable. The love, therefore, which we are called on to exercise, is not to be in such a sense disinterested as to require us to abandon all consideration of our own happiness. We are committed, if I may so speak, in charge to ourselves. We are made the guardians of our own happiness. Our actions will more affect ourselves than they possibly can all other beings of the human race; and the general good of all is most effectually promoted by each individual paying a just, but, remember, not an exclusive

regard, to himself. The nature of selfishness may be sometimes misunderstood. It does not consist in having a proper regard to ourselves; but in having no regard to any one but ourselves. We may, therefore, most clearly exhort men at the same time to a prudent concern for their own happiness, in perfect consistency with our exhortations that they should have a sincere and affectionate regard for the happiness of others.

In the second place the precept does not imply that we should, in a strict sense, love our neighbour *as much* as ourselves. This is only saying, that the precept does not go the extravagant length of asserting that we must literally take as much concern in the affairs of our neighbour as in our own. It seems simply to mean, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour" in a similar, proportional manner, as really and truly, as thou lovest thyself. In every deliberate plan and pursuit in life, we must take our neighbour's interest as truly into the account as our own; and only so far love ourselves, as is consistent with a sincere interest in the happiness of others. In this view of the subject, it seems to be only an extension of the principle on which the precept is founded; "whatever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." An appeal is here made to our self-love, to determine what love we should give to our neighbour. As much affection, sympathy, and regard, as you would wish to receive from others,

that is the measure and rule of the affection, which you should give to them. As much interest in the welfare of the community as you would wish every other man should take, just so much should you feel. The same love to mankind which you, as a member of the human race, would wish to find in all your brethren, must you yourself possess. In this view of the subject, the law of benevolence will require that we should be governed by a sincere regard to the highest good of all whose happiness it is in our power to affect; for this is precisely the affection which we should each of us wish every other man to cherish.

The benevolent man, on these principles, is one who delights in the contemplation of happiness, and feels it his duty to produce the highest possible degree of it among mankind. He has escaped from all feelings of exclusive self-love. He considers himself as a part of one great family. He takes as real an interest in the joys and sorrows, the interests and pursuits, the hopes and fears, of his neighbour, as in his own. It is the wish nearest his heart to make himself, and those around him, and as far as his influence extends, the whole human race, enlightened and happy. Nothing, therefore, which interests the happiness of mankind is indifferent to him. No creature of God is so humble, that his kind actions, or at least his good wishes, do not extend to him. No member of the human race is sunk so low, even by guilt and sin,

that his pity at least cannot reach him. Every thing harsh and dissonant is subdued in his breast. He suffers long and is kind. He envies not. He vaunteth not himself; is not puffed up. He does not behave himself unseemly; seeks not his own; is not easily provoked; thinks no evil. He rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. He bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Such then is the christian virtue which has received the various names of benevolence, charity, and love to our neighbour. It commends itself to us—by every motive which is best adapted to touch the human heart. We are incited to it even by the motive with which it appears to be most at variance—by the motive of rational self-interest itself. It is the eternal decree of heaven that the exclusively selfish man shall be miserable even in this world. As he never gives love to any man, he can never receive a return of love. He is at war with the general good of his species, and is therefore in fact the common enemy of mankind. His money may command attentions, nay, even procure the outward show of respect. But he can never receive the homage of an unbought smile. He can never receive the warm tribute of a truly grateful heart. Wealth is too poor to purchase love. Power is not strong enough to enchain affection. The eye may fall abashed in the presence of grandeur; the lips may chant the praise

of affluence; the knee may bend in homage before the splendour of authority; but the heart is above all bribe, and will give its affections to goodness alone. The selfish man is therefore shut out from all that gives grace and value to life, all that makes life a blessing; for what is existence worth to him who has no man's confidence, no man's sympathy, no man's love!

I might show, that without looking beyond the present world, and on the coolest calculation of rational self-interest, the exclusively selfish man defeats his own object. There is no necessary opposition between self-love and the love of our neighbour. It is happiness which we all seek; and happiness consists not in self-love as such, but in the gratification of our affections. If I have learned to feel a sincere affection for the good of my neighbour, I may taste as great and real happiness in the gratification of the affection, as in any one of which self is the exclusive object. The man who deliberately seeks the greatest good of the whole system of which he is part, feels at least as much delight in the pursuit, and as much joy in any degree of success, as he who excludes from his views every thought but that of personal interest, and makes self the great centre of all his wishes. This is true, without taking into consideration the truth, that love to others must always beget love from them; without carrying our views to the consequences of our actions in another life;

and without estimating the happiness which the benevolent man must feel, in the consciousness that he is acting under the eye of a Being whose nature is love, and who will regard with complacency and affection him who sincerely and humbly labours to imitate his perfections. Of the inexpressible worth of this consideration he only can judge, who has felt its influence. But such a man will tell you, that there is in the hope that we are regarded with complacency by God, more deep-felt delight than in all which the world has to offer of good. Let then the selfish man think of this. He may perhaps find that he is sacrificing the very end which he proposes to himself; that his selfish calculations are as false as they are contemptible and low. He may find that it is no paradox to say, that even on the principles of self-love itself, he is bound to free himself from all inordinate and exclusive regard to his own interest.

But though even on the calculations of self-love, we should be induced to cultivate a benevolent disposition, it is recommended to us by motives of far higher dignity. There is something in it to which the heart of every human being pays involuntary homage. The whole system of refined and gentle manners on which the present age so much values itself, is but a poor attempt to imitate this virtue. All the artificial courtesies of life, all the heartless ceremonies of what is called polite-

ness, are but the unconscious respect which hypocrisy renders to benevolence. The world feels the necessity of "assuming the virtue, though it has it not." How fair a scene would life present, if all this artificial good will were really what it seems to be; if men's hearts spoke in their words. All pride, envy, malice, revenge, and every form in which the bad passions of our nature display themselves, would vanish away. The beams of mutual kindness, reflected from every face, would make constant sunshine in every soul. The reign of universal benevolence would cause the wildernesses and solitary places of the earth to be glad, and all its moral deserts to rejoice and blossom like the rose. Such a scene as this, however, is but the visionary painting of imagination, the reality of which no eye in this world shall ever see.

But though the universal reign of benevolence is not here to be looked for, each man may yet contribute something to extend its influence. And what higher motive can any man require, than that which he will find in the contemplation of the character of that blessed being, who has left us an example that we should follow his steps. It was benevolence which led our Saviour to heal our sins and woes, to minister to our infirmities, to soften the nature of man, and melt his heart to mercy and love. For this he endured all the contradictions of sinners. For this he was scorned

and hated on the earth. For this he toiled, and wept, and suffered, and died on the cross. The object of all his sufferings, the end of all his commandments, is that virtue of which we speak. It is love; love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. If then you venerate his holy name, if you claim the title, and aspire after the hopes of christians, you must walk in that temper in which he walked on the earth. You must learn to bear the fruits of the spirit, peace, long suffering, gentleness and goodness. You must learn to be kindly affectioned towards your fellow men, to be sincerely interested in their happiness, to forbear with them, to forgive their foibles, to forget their injuries, to bear their burdens of sorrow and infirmity, and so to fulfil the law of Christ.

There is another motive to benevolence, of unutterable moment, drawn from the representation which is given to us of the last great scene of retribution. We are told that the inquiry will then be, not how we have reasoned, nor how we have taught; not how many sacrifices we have offered, how many wonderful works we have done, nor how many times we have called our master Lord, Lord; but whether we have ever fed the hungry, and given drink to the thirsty; whether we have sheltered the stranger, and clothed the naked; whether we have ministered to the sick, and visited the imprisoned; whether, in short, we have ever sincerely

interested ourselves in the happiness of our fellow men. He who has done this towards the meanest of the human race, has done it to his Saviour and Lord; and he shall receive abundant recompence. But against him whose life has been absorbed in exclusive selfishness, whose heart has felt no emotions of benevolence, no visitings of mercy, the gates of heavenly blessedness must be shut; for to such a spirit the happiness of heaven will be wholly uncongenial.

My brethren, language can add nothing to this representation; imagination can image to itself nothing more awful. On him, who can bring home this consideration to his mind, and still resist its influence, all other motives must be lost. From the sleep of such insensibility the voice of God alone can awake him.

SERMON VIII.

LAW OF RETALIATION.

ROMANS, XII. 17.

Recompense to no man evil for evil.

This passage is one of many that occur in the New Testament, in which, for the sake of greater brevity and impression, a general maxim of conduct is laid down, without being accompanied with an enumeration of the limitations and distinctions, which are to be observed in its practical application. The precept is, I conceive, intended rather to be descriptive of the character and disposition, which a christian should possess under the reception of injuries, than to regulate his actions in every specific instance. For it is evident that there are occasions when it is not only lawful, but laudable, to return evil on him, by whom evil is inflicted. Such for example, are the cases of punishment in the regular administration of justice; and such also is every instance of justifiable self-defence. If then the precept of the Apostle were under-

stood as a universal prohibition of retaliation in every case, it is clear that the foundations of civil society would be broken up, cruelty and injustice could never be punished, and our religion would abandon its followers an unresisting prey to the most vicious and profligate of mankind.

That the Apostle did not intend that this precept should be understood in such a sense, is evident from a clause in the next verse; "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men." It is here clearly implied, that after a man has done all that is possible, as much as lies in him, it may sometimes be impossible to live at peace with all his fellow men.

But although the precept, when taken as a maxim of conduct, is to be received with some exceptions, when understood as descriptive of the character and disposition of a christian under the reception of injuries, it is universally and absolutely true. Such, we admit, is the condition of human life, that cases must occur, when even the laws of benevolence will require us to make the injurious man suffer for his injustice. But there is no case conceivable, even in imagination, in which we may be allowed to retaliate evil for the sake of evil; to inflict pain, with the simple intention of giving pain; in one word, with a spirit of revenge.

As it is impossible to deny that there are cases, in which retaliation is necessary for the mainte-

nance of our just rights, and therefore justifiable, it will be the object of the present discourse to state some principles, which may assist us in determining when those cases exist; and to say something of the kind of retaliation which we may use, and the temper in which it should be exercised.

I. With regard to those cases of injury in which retaliation is justifiable, we remark first, that the injury must appear to be intentional; secondly, that it must be of some real magnitude; and thirdly, that it must be of a kind which retaliation can remedy, either by causing reparation to be made, or by preventing a repetition of the offence to ourselves or others. All the conditions of this rule must, I conceive, be satisfied, in order to make any case of retaliation justifiable. I shall endeavour to illustrate each in its order.

1. We may say that an injury, which justifies retaliation, must be proved to be *intentional*—to have been done with an injurious design. This is a limitation of great importance, and if it were observed, would extinguish at once more than half the animosities of mankind. "Without knowing particulars, I take upon me," says Butler, "to assure all persons, who think they have received indignities or injurious treatment, that they may depend upon it as in a manner certain, that the offence is not so great as they themselves imagine." We must remember our great liability to error, when we are judges in our own cause. It is diffi-

cult for a man of the strictest justice not to favour himself too much, in the calmest moments of solitary meditation; how much more then, when his passions are agitated by a sense of wrong, and his attention is engrossed by pain, interest, or danger. It is not enough that we know that we suffer by the conduct of another; it must be clear that he designedly or willingly makes us suffer. We are bound to inquire too, how much his fault is extenuated by mistake, inadvertence or pardonable negligence. We must take care not to charge to design, what was the effect of accident. In the case of injuries done to ourselves we are in so peculiar a situation, that it is almost as difficult to see them as they really are, as for the eye to see itself. Self-love is in these cases a medium of a very singular kind. It magnifies every thing which is amiss in others, while at the same time it lessens every thing amiss in ourselves. This seems to point us to the propriety of submitting our cause to the judgment of others, whose passions are cool, whose reason is unprejudiced, and above all, who are not interested to flatter us.

When we have done all this; when we have made every allowance for inadvertence and misunderstanding, for the partialities of self-love, and the false lights in which every thing is placed by anger; when we have collected the most ample evidence, and subjected our cause to unprejudiced revision; then, perhaps some of you will say, may

we not have full liberty to return pain upon the head of him who inflicts it? No indeed, my friends; we have then only advanced a single step; we have only made ourselves ready for another and equally important inquiry—whether the injury which we have received, whatever malignity may have prompted it, is after all of any such serious magnitude as to call upon us for retaliation.

2. It is not enough then, we remark in the second place, that a man has intended to injure us, that he possesses a hostile temper towards us,or that he has wounded our pride, and triumphs in his success. If he have only the desire without the power to injure us, he is no proper object of retaliation. A wise man will only despise, and a good man only pity him, as the miserable prey of malignant and self-tormenting passions. It is only when we suffer by *an essential injury*, that we are justified in making any active exertions to cause the injustice of him who assails us to recoil on himself.

A real injury I take to be an aggression which lessens or destroys our means of usefulness in life; which impairs our ability to discharge some duty to our fellow men, to ourselves, or to our Creator. Any attack, which leaves our means and powers of action essentially entire and unimpaired, cannot surely be said to have done us any real injury; and as the principles on which we proceed reduce all retaliation to the case of necessary self-defence,

we may safely pass by an impotent attempt to injure us, without feeling ourselves obliged to resent it. If mankind would wait till this condition were satisfied, before they proceeded to retaliation, the grounds of animosity would be narrowed almost beyond belief. By far the greater part of our contests relate merely to trifles swelled into importance by voluntary aggravation. The deadliest feuds which exist among mankind often originate in some inconsiderable aggression, resented at first by petulance and passion, then persisted in by false pride, exasperated by mutual and incessant retaliation, till at length it ends in bitter and unextinguishable hatred.

3. But after having satisfied ourselves that the injury under which we suffer is intentional, and that it seriously affects our means of usefulness, another inquiry yet remains; whether any retaliation which we can make *will remedy the evil;* whether it will procure reparation to ourselves, or is necessary to prevent a repetition of the offence? As this inquiry involves the consideration of the legitimate means of retaliation, we may remark on both under the same head.

According to the principles already laid down, as retaliation is never justifiable, except when necessary to protect us in the exercise of some of our important rights and duties, we must on the same principles conclude, that it is never to be resorted to, unless it will probably be effectual to this

end. I mean by this to say, that retaliation is never to be resorted to as a punishment of a person injuring us, but simply, as was before stated, as a means of self-defence. The chastisement of the hostile and malignant disposition of an enemy towards us, the retribution of so much pain for so much guilty intention, it is not for igno nt, erring and short sighted man to think of inflicting. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Let us not presume to invade the prerogative of Omnipotence. When we have provided for our own security, it becomes us to leave the punishment of the guilty mind to that Being, whose knowledge penetrates every concealment, from the operation of whose will no art nor flight can escape, and who alone can weigh in the balance of omniscient justice the precise amount and aggravation of every crime. Protection and reparation are the only ends which we are allowed to pursue; and all means, which do not tend to these ends are therefore utterly wrong and indefensible. Now, in almost every case in which any of our important rights are openly invaded, we may find both protection and reparation in the laws of our country. There are indeed some cases to which the law does not reach. But in most of these the reason why the law is inadequate is, that they are of such a nature that the attempt to inflict punishment would create more evil than it would prevent; and it is for the general good that such injuries

should be left to the righteous retribution of heaven, which will at length assuredly overtake them. The wisdom which in these cases restrains the arm of the law ought likewise to operate on us. There may still, however, remain some instances to which the law does not reach, where the duty of retaliation may devolve on the individual. We may punish a man who has overreached us, for example, by not trusting him again, and by proclaiming his dishonesty to the world. We may lawfully use all honest means to reduce the unmerited influence of a man who is exerting that influence wrongfully to lessen our reputation. And in general, we may remark, that in those cases in which the laws are silent, we are allowed to employ all the fair instruments which we may possess, to repel injustice; provided always that we are careful to make self-protection the only object of our efforts, and adequate reparation the measure of their exertion.

But it may be said, that as a man's respectability clearly constitutes a part of his means of usefulness, what is to be done, when from the state of manners and opinions in the community, he will be degraded from his respectability, if under certain circumstances he suffers an insult to pass unnoticed? Is not the practice of duelling placed, in this way, on the ground of self-defence? This, I think, is the only ground on which any rational man will now vindicate this custom. The barbarity of its origin; its intrinsic absurdity as a means of punishment;

the inequality of its operation, in putting the good and the bad exactly on a level; all these things are now, I believe, very generally conceded. It is only said, that absurd as it is, such is the state of things that a man may sometimes, however unwillingly, be compelled to resort to it as the only means left him, of vindicating his standing, and consequently his usefulness in society. It will not be necessary at the present time to enter largely into the consideration of this subject; it will be quite safe to place the question on the ground which is thus chosen. We may assert then that the justifying reason alleged does not exist any where, I believe, but certainly not among us. A man who possesses any real respectability does not forfeit it by disregarding an insult, which nothing in his own conduct has justly provoked. And if he should have been betrayed into any conduct, which reason and conscience do not approve, still I am confident that he will rise, rather than fall, in the esteem of every man whose regard is worth the having, by making such concessions as reason and true honour will warrant. I do not think so meanly of the state of society in which we live, I do not rate so low the influence of high morals and pure christianity, as to think that a man, who has nothing with which to reproach himself, can be thrust from his place in society by disregarding the menaces of a ruffian.

But even if this should be thought too favorable a view of the state of opinion among us, or if

the question should be asked as to the conduct of a man in a state of society different from our own, still I should have no question of what would be demanded of a man of religion and morals. I speak, you observe, of a man of religion and morals; for they who on every other subject notoriously have neither, will of course make rules for themselves. It is one of the dreadful consequences of a life of habitual libertinism and irreligion, that a man will not be believed when he pleads scruples of conscience on this subject, who has gloried in having none on any other. But with regard to a man of religion, or even of high morals, his course appears to me to be as clear as the path of the sun in a cloudless sky. The regard of the world, considered as a means of usefulness, is, I admit, an unquestionable good. But it is not so great a good that it may not be purchased at too high a price; and it is assuredly bought too dear, when it costs us the violation of the laws of God, of reason, and humanity. No man can have the right to take away the life of his antagonist, or to expose his own, merely to gain the suffrages of the world. It will not do to admit, that the eternal principles of right may be superseded at the command of fashion and prejudice. It is better for us, at any hazard, to obey the voice of God rather than of man; and if necessary, to give up the regard of the world, rather than resign the consolations of innocence.

II. Having considered the occasions and the

means of justifiable retaliation, it remains only to say a few words on the *temper* with which it should be exercised. After all the conditions which make retaliation justifiable are complied with; after we are satisfied that the injury of which we complain is intentional; that it is of a magnitude seriously to affect our powers of usefulness; that there is no other way of maintaining our rights, and that we have such lawful means of retaliation as will ensure to us redress and security; still, before they are used, the christian is called on once more to pause and to examine himself. He must first empty his heart of all malice; of every particle of that unholy, that accursed spirit, which unlike every other principle or passion of our nature, has for its very end and object the misery of our fellow creatures; which broods over the memory of its wrongs; which delights in the anticipation of the pain it is about to inflict; which gluts its pride, and inflames its animosity, with the fancied supplications of humbled enmity. The pure genius of christianity forbids this unhallowed spirit of revenge in every degree, under all its forms, upon every occasion. The gospel allows no retaliation, which is not consistent with a forgiving spirit, with a feeling of sorrow and regret that we are compelled to resort to it. Even when retaliation is in itself justifiable, it ceases to be so, and becomes deeply criminal, if it be exercised with a revengeful temper.

This is the sense in which the Apostle intended his direction in the text to be understood, and

in this he imitated the preaching and example of his Master. Our Saviour, as has been well remarked, who estimated virtues by their solid utility, and not by their fashion or popularity, prefers the forgiveness of injury to every other. He enjoins it oftener; with more earnestness; under a greater variety of forms; and with this weighty and peculiar circumstance, that the forgiveness of others is the condition on which we are to ask from God forgiveness for ourselves. Of him who hopes to be forgiven, it is indispensably required that he should forgive. Can it then be possible that any human being should be found, who remembers how much he has to be forgiven, and who yet has no charity, no pity, no forgiveness, for his offending fellow-sinner! Can we remember how many offences God has endured from us without blotting us from the earth; that He has endured our insensibility, our ingratitude, our numberless sins; and yet cannot we endure the slightest injury from our neighbour, but we must burn with anger and revenge, and perhaps think it necessary to wipe out the offence in his blood! My friends, let us pray God to forgive us, if we have ever felt this spirit. Let us, as we value his favour, extinguish our unholy animosities, and learn charity for each other's failings. Let us seek to love one another as Christ loved us; that we may not be wholly unworthy to be admitted at last to those blissful mansions, where peace and love abide eternally.

SERMON IX.

HUMILITY.

PROVERBS, XV. 33.

Before honour is humility.

Although it has undoubtedly been the effect of the diffusion of christianity, to refine and elevate the standard of morals throughout the world, it is still not to be denied, that the christian estimates many characters and events very differently from the man of the world. Some of the virtues, which christianity esteems of the highest value, and to which she promises her richest rewards, are unhonoured if not despised by the world; and in return, many of those qualities which the world considers of the highest dignity, christianity pronounces to be among the most dangerous and detestable vices. The world, for example, binds its wreath of glory around the brow of the sanguinary conqueror of empires; but christianity looks down on his triumphs with horror and disdain; and reserves *her* brightest laurel for the lowly, unassuming conquer-

or of himself. The world gives its admiration to the successful cultivator of science, even though he may be destitute of some of the fairest of the virtues; but christianity gives him none of her respect, however rich may be his powers, and however illuminated his understanding, if he have neglected to cultivate that knowledge which she values above all others, the knowledge of God and of his own heart. In the estimation of the world, wealth is allowed to compensate for the absence of almost every amiable quality; but christianity regards affluence, unsanctified by goodness, with abhorrence, and pronounces the poorest being that walks the earth, blessed and honourable, if his heart be rich in piety and virtue. The world praises him as a man of spirit and of honour, who bears no injury without instant and ample revenge; but christianity crowns him with her highest honours, who can pity and forgive, and do good to his most deadly foe. The world, in fine, gives its homage to the splendid exterior of pride and vain-glory; but christianity approves and acknowledges the man of sincere humility alone. "Whosoever exalteth himself," saith Jesus, "shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

There is no subject on which the christian, and the man of the world, are more completely at issue than on this. Our Saviour, by all his words and actions, raises the virtue of humility to a rank which no teacher of morals ever before

gave it. The man of the world esteems it a mean and poor-spirited quality; at best, only the virtue of feeble minds.

Let us consider, my brethren, the reasons why so much importance is given to humility in the christian system, and see, whether instead of being, as the world regards it, unworthy of a noble and generous mind, it may not be shown to be in its origin among the most exalted, and in its nature among the most indispensable of all the virtues.

The reason why the true dignity of the christian grace of humility is not universally acknowledged, is, that men do not attend to its origin. Humility supposes an act of comparison, and does, I admit, imply a sense of inferiority and unworthiness. But how broad and evident is the distinction between this quality, and every thing like meanness and abjectness of mind. A man is not humble because he submits patiently to disgrace, which he has not dignity enough to avoid, nor spirit enough to resent. He is not humble because all his desires, when compared with those of his fellow-men, are grovelling and low, and all his powers narrow and debased. The very reverse of this is true. A christian is made humble, not so much by comparing himself with others, as by comparing himself with his duty; not by thinking of what he is, but of what he ought to be; not by considering whether he is little or great, when compared with others, but remembering that he is nothing, when compared with

perfect excellence. A christian, then, is humbler than another man, not because his views are mean-spirited and low, but because he measures himself by a high standard; because his ideas of excellence are lofty and distinct; because his conceptions of duty are noble and exalted; because, in fine, he measures himself, not so much with the frail beings around him, as with that image of perfection, which his spotless Master has left for his imitation.

True it is, that a man of genuine humility often makes a lowly contrast of himself with his fellow-men, and esteems others better than himself. But this is rather the effect of his humility, than the original cause, and arises also from the superiority of his views. It is because he knows himself better than he can know any other man; because he is so deeply impressed with his own unworthiness; because he values so little all that he has already attained, compared with that after which he aspires; because he is willing to believe the hearts of others purer, and their views of religion more sublime, than his own. His humility however does not blind him to his real character, and still less does it lead him to an affected ignorance of what every one else perceives. He is not insensible of the real elevation which his talents or virtues may give him; but this conviction of superiority is only the calm inference of his understanding, and not, like vanity or pride, a busy importunate passion of the heart.

Compare then the proud man with the man of humility, and tell me, which is the more dignified being. Pride, like humility, supposes an act of comparison. But the comparison of the proud man is not between himself and the standard of his duty; between what he is and what he ought to be; but between himself and his fellow-men. He looks around him, forgets his own defects and weakness, infirmities and sins, and because he finds, or imagines he finds, in some respects, a little superiority to his fellow men—at the greatest it can be *but* a little—because he, one worm of the dust, believes himself to be somewhat more rich, more learned, more successful than another, he thinks this to be a sufficient ground for swelling with self-complacency, and regarding those around him with disdain and contempt. The humble man, on the contrary, is so full of the thought of the exceeding breadth of the commandments of God, and of that supreme excellence to which his religion teaches him to aspire; and he so constantly recollects the imperfection of his approaches to it, that every idea of a vain-glorious comparison of himself with his neighbour dies away within him. He can only remember that God is every thing, and that in his august presence, all distinctions are lost, and all human beings reduced to the same level. Say then, my friends, is it not pride that is so mean, so poor-spirited and low; is it not pride that is a mark of a little and narrow and feeble mind; and is not hu-

mility alone the truly noble, the truly generous and sublime quality?

There is this farther proof of the superior elevation of the humble man. The man of pride, with all his affected contempt of the world, must evidently estimate it very highly; else whence so much complacency at the idea of surpassing others? Whence that restless desire of distinction, that passion for theatrical display, which inflames his heart and occupies his whole attention? Why is it that his strongest motive to good actions is their notoriety, and that he considers every worthy deed as lost, when it is not publickly displayed? It is only because the world, and the world's applause are every thing to him; and that he cannot live but on the breath of popular favour. But the humble man, with all his real lowliness, has yet risen above the world. He looks for that honour, which cometh down from on high, and the whispers of worldly praise die away upon his ear. When his thoughts return from the contemplation of the infinite excellence of God and the future glories of virtue, the objects of this life appear reduced in their importance; in the same way, as the landscape around appears little and low to him, whose eye has been long directed to the solemn grandeur and wide magnificence of the starry heavens. I appeal to you, my friends, to decide on the comparative dignity of the characters of the proud and the humble man. I call on you to say, whether our blessed

Master has given to humility too high a rank in the scale of excellence.

But this quality, despised by the world, and so little regarded by the moralists of antiquity as that it is doubtful whether the Romans had a word to express it, is yet as indispensable as it is dignified. It must be at the basis of all goodness. Piety and benevolence can exist in their purity only in the breast of a humble man. Among the essential constituents of piety are reverence and gratitude. But if you consider what it is to revere and be grateful to God, you will see that no one but a humble man can do either. Reverence in its nature implies an acknowledgment of superiority in any being to whom we give it; and when it is given to God in its purity, this superiority is perceived to be so infinite, that all comparison ceases, and all human claims fade and disappear. We feel that in comparison with God, the noblest being to whom he has given existence, yea, all that the universe embraces, all that we can conceive of great and good, all, when compared with HIM, sink into unimportance. How much more insignificant, then, is man, at his fairest estate; man, the child of frailty, error and sin; man, that fades before the moth, that drinketh iniquity like water; that is born of dust and kindred to the grave! Now is it conceivable, that a man should habitually cherish these thoughts of the grandeur of God and his own feebleness, without having every emotion of arro-

gance and pride extinguished in his breast? Will the man who habitually humbles himself in the presence of his God, be likely to bear himself proudly in the presence of his fellow men? Will he, who from a sense of unworthiness, shrinks into nothing before the throne of his Maker, be apt to swell into imaginary importance as soon as he finds himself among the dependent offspring of the same Parent? Can we conceive of two ideas more evidently and entirely separated than that of *reverence* prostrating itself in adoration before God, lost in wonder at the contemplation of his perfections, overwhelmed by a sense of its own imperfection, frailty and sin;—and that of *pride*, erecting itself with fancied elevation, full of haughty disdain of all around, and exclusively engrossed by conscious self-complacency? Is it too much, then, to say that no other than a humble man can sincerely reverence God?

It is equally impossible that any other than a humble man should be deeply and sincerely *grateful* to God. Gratitude is in its nature at war with the principle of self-sufficiency, because it implies that we have received favours from another. It wounds that secret and unavowed, but real belief, that always accompanies pride, that we are the authors of our own good qualities, and that our enjoyments are independent and unborrowed. There is a peculiar opposition between pride and that gratitude, which we exercise towards the Deity.

How is it possible, that any man should recollect that all the talents and good affections which he possesses are the unmerited gift of God; that he owes all which exalts him in the esteem of others, all that constitutes his happiness here and his hopes of felicity hereafter, to God's mercy alone; how can he recollect this, without perceiving, that however strong may be his obligation to gratitude, he has not the smallest foundation for pride? He who habitually refers all that he enjoys to the bounty of heaven, cannot surely be vain of the little distinctions which elevate him above his fellow men. If he differs from another, it is God who makes him to differ, and of what can he be proud? When too he recollects—and the pious man never forgets it—that all this goodness has been showered on one not only without claim to it, but on one sinful, insensible, and unworthy, must not every emotion of self-complacency melt within his breast? We may surely venture to repeat the assertion that no man can be sincerely grateful to God, who has not learned humility in the school of Christ.

Since then it appears, that humility is necessary for all just reverence and all genuine gratitude to God, the assertion was not too strong, that he cannot be a pious man who is not at the same time a humble man. But I believe that more than this is true. No one will be really and uniformly benevolent to his fellow men, who does not possess humility. Vanity is a most unsocial passion. The

portion of time and attention, which mankind are willing to spare from their avocations and pleasures to devote to the admiration of each other, is so small, that every successful adventurer is felt to have impaired the common stock. The success of one is the disappointment of multitudes. Hence a man, in whom vanity is a strong passion, is necessarily led to regard his rival as his enemy, and tempted to rejoice in his miscarriage, and repine at his success. At least, his heart will be gradually formed to a profound indifference to the welfare of others. Attentive only to himself, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow creatures, as members of the same family, beings with whom he is appointed to act, to suffer, and to sympathize, he considers life as a stage, on which he is performing a part, and mankind only as spectators, who stand by to admire and applaud.

But if you still doubt the incompatibility of pride with real christian benevolence, consider but for a moment, the general condition of human existence. Recollect how much we are compelled to endure in the common intercourse of life, from the opposing claims of our neighbours; how often our plans cross each other, our designs interfere, and our interests are unavoidably at variance. Here then, the field opens for the exertion of benevolence. And do you expect that he who is constantly fostering an idea of his superiority to others, will be ready to yield, or accommodate his

claims to theirs? When his plans are opposed, his superiority denied, and his claims slighted, is this the man from whom you are to expect moderation and benevolence? What are you to hope from a man, whose thoughts are continually occupied with his own perfections, who never stirs from the narrow circle which pride and the selfishness of pride have drawn around him? No; the sentiment of a uniform and general benevolence is too exalted to be felt by any other than the man of lowliness. He only, who thinks himself sent into the world, not for himself alone, but to fulfil the purposes of God; who feels that he is only a humble instrument in His hand, and that he is honoured by the privilege of serving Him, and his fellow men; he alone it is, whose feelings are sublime enough, whose heart is wide enough, to take to its embrace the whole family of mankind.

I have thus offered some reasons in vindication of the rank which is given to the virtue of humility in the christian system. I have endeavoured to show that it arises from the most exalted of all principles, and that it is essential to the existence of all genuine piety to God, and benevolence to man. If this be so, a reply is given to an objection which has been made to the gospel, for the preference which it bestows on this and other passive virtues, over those of a more active and imposing character. It is true, that, in the precepts of our Lord, the first place is always given to the meek, retiring and

unobtrusive graces. The man, who suffers patiently, is there ranked above him, who contrives wisely or executes boldly; he who forgives, above him who revenges an injury; he, who abases, above him who exalts himself. If then, as I hope, this preference has been vindicated in the case of humility, you will feel that christianity is not only relieved from a cavil, but supplied with a proof. Humility can never be a popular quality; and how can we suppose that a system which lays so much stress upon it, is the contrivance of human ingenuity? Would a human lawgiver, ambitious that his system should descend to posterity, ambitious of its universal reception even in his own age, have counteracted his project by attempting to extinguish in the breast of others the feelings which acted so powerfully in his own? Would a man like ourselves, eager to become the founder of a popular religion, have opposed those very passions of the human heart, which, as they are esteemed honourable among men, are ever most uncontrolled in their influence, and most easily pardoned in their excess? What then is the inference from these facts? Is it not, that he, who spake as never man spake, has left in the very humility of his precepts, the stamp of divine authority? Does not the derision of his adversaries plainly enough show that if *they* had been the framers of the christian system, they would have decked it in a thousand ornaments to captivate the false taste of mankind?

And is not the fact, that our Saviour did not do this, but rather directed all his preaching to the inculcation of virtues the most opposed to the prevailing prejudices and wishes of his hearers, a solid proof that he courted not the applause of men; that he felt he was the messenger of the most High; and that he relied for the success of his ministry on more than human aid? If it be allowed that the virtue of humility really possesses the dignity and importance which our Saviour gives to it; and if it be remembered how slightly and imperfectly it was taught by the philosophers of an cient days, we shall scarcely be able to avoid the inference, that he who first gave to this virtue its proper rank, must have had wisdom that was from above, and authority that was divine.

My friends, I must leave it to yourselves to make the proper improvement of this interesting subject. It is the tendency and design of this view of the dignity and importance of humility, to persuade you to cultivate and practise it. It is not an easy duty. It is not only opposed to many of the favorite maxims of the world, but to many of the most powerful propensities of our own hearts. Let us remember that it is the virtue which was ever heard from the lips, and seen in the life, of our blessed Master. Meditate then often on the perfection of his character. Cease to make vain-glorious comparisons between yourselves and others. Think more of your faults, and less of your virtues.

Let your sins be ever before you. Approach often the throne of divine mercy. Remember there your unworthiness in the sight of God. Implore him to extinguish every emotion of pride within your breasts. He has promised by his Son, that if you ask, you shall receive; if you seek, you shall find; if you knock at the gate of mercy, it shall be opened unto you.

SERMON X.

HONESTY.

JOB, XXVII. 5.

Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me.

THE word *integrity* seems to be used by this patient and magnanimous sufferer in a somewhat wider sense than that in which it is commonly received at the present day. With us it is usually taken to mean the same thing with honesty or uprightness; and seems to imply merely the perfect discharge of the social duties. But as it is used in different passages of the book of Job, it seems to regard the whole circle of the virtues, personal, social, and devotional. When the infatuated wife of this pious man exhorts him to resort to suicide as the only relief from the accumulated evils which oppressed him, she impatiently asks, "Dost thou still retain thine *integrity*?" The word must here mean his fear of offending God in any particular; his respect for all his commandments. A man of integrity, in this sense, means a man of uni-

versal goodness, of ripened virtue. It does not indeed imply that he never yields to any temptation, for of what mortal can this be said! but it supposes that he respects the authority on which all the laws of God are founded, and does not therefore habitually tolerate in himself any one vice; does not deliberately permit himself to offend in any single point. There are no breaks in the links of that golden chain by which all his virtues are bound together. There is no secret and unseen disease preying on the soundness and healthiness of his moral constitution. In the goodly superstructure of his character, there can be found no unnoticed seam, through which even the penetrating light of conscience can enter, betraying that its foundation is unsolid and insecure.

In this sense of the word, we shall all agree, that to pronounce any one to be a man of integrity, is to give him most exalted praise. But when it is used in the more restricted sense in which it is received among us, it is supposed to imply the possession of a very necessary and very valuable, certainly, but not a very high and dignified virtue. I however think otherwise. I believe that what is sometimes called "common honesty," when it is taken to imply all that it fairly and properly means, is a very exalted quality, and is, I am afraid, not so common as is sometimes believed. I propose in this discourse to consider some of the modes in which the laws of honesty are most usually violat-

ed in our dealings with one another, and examine some of those elements, or features of moral character, which mark, and are necessary to constitute, a man of integrity—a truly honest man.

I. There are certain violations of honesty, which the laws define and punish as open frauds, of the nature of which no one can be ignorant, the turpitude of which no one denies, and which therefore do not require even to be named to those who habitually meet in our religious assemblies.

There are other departures from the strict rule of right, from their nature not cognizable by the laws, which really amount to the same thing as dishonesty, though they sometimes receive gentler names. Of this nature is every species of deceit, dissimulation, or evasion, in our dealings with one another. For not only is it dishonest, expressly or by implication, to ascribe to our goods any quality which we know they have not; but also designedly to conceal any fault which we know they have, and with which the buyer cannot in fairness be supposed to be acquainted. It is dishonesty to represent our wares to be, in any respect, what they are not, or not to be what they are. It is dishonesty also, of a very aggravated kind, to take advantage of another's confidence in our integrity;—to borrow, for example, on false securities or false representations of our circumstances, without any intention or reasonable expectation of repaying; and it is dishonesty to raise by design any expectations which we do not intend or desire to fulfil.

Dishonesty is implied in all cases, where the forms of law are used to shelter us in any violalations of equity. The laws of civil society are instituted mainly to guard its peace and general security; not to watch over the virtue of the individual. This last is the province of religion and morality. They must proceed on fixed and known rules, which in general will operate equitably, but which in some particular cases will not. Here, then, a thoroughly honest man will follow, not what the law may permit, but what equity demands. He must not, for example, keep his neighbour to the very words and letter of his agreement, when they clearly violate the original spirit and equitable intention of it. Nor, on the other hand, is he allowed to allege any flaw or defect in form, to get loose from a contract which in good faith and conscience he ought to perform. He is not allowed to put another to the charge and hazard of the law unjustly or needlessly; or, in ever so necessary a law-suit, to occasion unnecessary expenses, or contrive unfair delays.

We must place excessive rigour and hardness in our dealings, among the violations of strict integrity. He who takes advantage of a buyer's ignorance or particular necessities, to insist on a higher price than the current value or fair "market price" for his commodity; or on the other hand, who uses the same advantages to beat down his merchandize greatly below this standard, violates the

laws of honesty. Under this head also must be placed the exaction of usury—not because it is not right that a man should receive compensation for lending his money, as well as any other property into which that money may be converted—but in some degree, because the rapid accumulation of wealth without industry is bad for the state and for the individual, and chiefly, because we must know that in most instances he who is willing to borrow at exorbitant interest must be on the brink of insolvency, and that by lending to him, we only precipitate his downfall, and increase his inability to discharge the just demands of those creditors, who have entrusted him with the hard earnings of their own exertion. In this way we make ourselves partakers of another man's sins.

In the fourth place, we must number *extravagance* among the cases of dishonesty. Whoever spends upon himself, or throws away upon any other person, more than he can prudently afford, whatever fine names of elegance, good nature or generosity his conduct may receive, in reality disposes of what cannot fairly be called his own; he does in effect defraud his family, and will be in great danger of being driven at last to endeavour to repair by unlawful means what he has lost by folly.

Finally, we must give the epithet of dishonesty to every act whereby we withhold or take from a neighbour, from any society or body of men, from

the government, from the public, any thing which they can justly call their right. Whether the amount be little or much; whether the guilt be divided among ever so great a number; whether the practice be ever so common; it is the same crime, however it may vary in degree. The possible cases of this description are innumerable; but no one can be at a loss to determine when they occur, who faithfully applies the same maxims of conduct in his dealings with others, which he would think it equitable to have in return applied to himself. This rule is so plain and so universal, that he who errs in its application must do so by a voluntary self-deception.

II. These statements of some of the modes in which the laws of honesty may be violated, have been made with a view to explain the nature of this virtue. They will receive some farther illustration, when we proceed to the second general object of the discourse, and consider some of the elements or features of moral character, which mark and are necessary to constitute a man of integrity.

In the first place we remark, that a man of integrity must be a man of principle. The distinctions between right and wrong in his mind must not be loose and floating, but clearly ascertained and settled. His opinions on the proper rule of life must be made up definitively, and not left to be varied and modified by circumstances. They must be clear, universal, absolute. He must have

weighed well the nature and obligations of virtue. He must be convinced that virtue is the supreme good. There must be no hesitation or parley in his mind, between the claims of God and Mammon. He must cultivate a ready perception of guilt; a moral sense awake and active to detect the first approaches of temptation; and a prompt and decisive resolution to resist it, under whatever form it may be disguised.

Therefore we remark, in the second place, that a man of integrity must be a man of consistency, or in other words, a man true to his principles. In order to this, his principles must be something more than opinions. They must be the universal law of his actions; the settled purpose of his soul. They must have so powerful a consent of the will to their propriety and obligations, as to chain down every discordant, every counteracting propensity of his nature, as with links of iron. He must feel that the motives to virtue are infinite; that nothing can be thrown into the opposite scale, no amount of earthly good, which can poize them even for an instant.

This leads me to say, in the third place, that a man of integrity must be a man of religious principle. I acknowledge that a regard for the opinion of mankind, a view of immediate self-interest, a dread of the laws of our country, and the dictates of the early implanted moral sentiments of our nature, will furnish a reflecting and calculating man, in a vast majority of cases, with a tolerably

steady and certain rule of life, and give him sufficient motives to observe it. But we are not speaking of one who is generally an honest man, but of one who is always so; not of one who is in most particulars just, but of one who is thoroughly so; who is sound to the very core. We are speaking of a man who retains his integrity at home and abroad, in secret and in public, by night and by day; who would be as faithful to his principles in the solitude of a desert, as before the eyes of the assembled world. And you must not expect to find a man of this description, who is not governed by religious principles; who is not influenced by a steady regard to the will of God, and the retributions of eternity. There are instances—and though they are not frequent, they are not imaginary ones—when the opinion of the multitude will be on the side of a departure from strict right; when worldly interest will appear to be in opposition to the laws of integrity; and when he who has no fear of God may think that he has nothing else to fear. Therefore it is apparent that the interests of virtue will not be securely and steadily maintained in any man's mind, who does not regard the approbation of God as the supreme law of action; who does not feel that when he does his duty, he may always safely leave the event to the care of Him, who will not permit his faithful servant finally to suffer for his obedience.

When we have said that a man of integrity must be a man of religious principle, we have said

what implies every thing else. It may be useful however, to go on to remark, fourthly, that a man of integrity will be a man of frankness and of truth. As he intends always to walk forward in the path of rectitude, he of course has nothing to conceal. He who in all his actions remembers that he is under the eye of Omniscience, cannot fear the keenest inquisition of his fellow men. He has therefore no artifices, no subterfuges, no double dealing in any of its forms. He knows but one avenue to the objects of his desire and pursuit; and that lies straight before him. His soul shrinks from every thing like deception. He never "palters to you in a double sense." His yea means yea. His nay means nay. His oath would add nothing to the sacredness of his word; for he remembers that God hears him always, and that his word, not less than his oath, is registered in heaven.

Lastly, a man of integrity is a man of courage and fortitude. By courage I do not mean that mere steadiness of nerves, which is often wholly mechanical; but a far less vulgar quality, the courage of sentiment. A man of integrity must possess a principle of moral action, strong enough to carry him through all the difficulties and obstacles, which sometimes lie in the path of rectitude, and of influence enough to authorize him in saying "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me." The course which honesty marks out is usually, if we merely consider this world, the

course of security and interest. But there are cases, though they may not occur in every one's life, in which it will cost a man dear to maintain his integrity. He may be called to encounter the opposition of his friends, and perhaps the opinion of the greater part of the society in which he lives. His singularity in virtue may sometimes expose him to derision, calumny, and scorn. He may even be threatened by evils of a darker aspect than disapprobation and contempt. He may be called to serious sufferings. To dare all that conscience and a good cause require, must sometimes be to dare even to die. At such a conjuncture a man must not only have very high principles on which he can fall back for support, but he must have some strength of character, some fortitude of purpose, to keep him true to those principles. Nothing short of that solemn and supreme energy, which an habitual confidence in the approbation and aid of the Almighty can inspire, will be sufficient to sustain him. And this, my friends, *is* sufficient. It has been *found* sufficient to sustain a man "faithful among the faithless, unshaken, unseduced, unterrified." The fight of faith is indeed sometimes a hard one. Pleasure may seduce us with a Syren's voice; honour may lift up to our view its glittering crown; wealth may pour at our feet its golden tides; and the world may arm all these allurements with the terror of its frown and its laugh, if we resist them. But amid these trials,

the man of integrity will still sustain himself by thinking of God, and of his duty; by remembering that when his warfare is accomplished, he will hear from his conscience the sweet whisper of peace.

> Servant of God, well done! well hast thou fought
> The better fight—
> —for this was all thy care,
> To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds
> Judged thee perverse.

What shall we compare to the value of such a testimony as this! Who would not rather have such praise as this from the voice of God within him, than possess all the power which fires the dreams of ambition; all the pleasure in which the imagination of sensuality revels; all the wealth which swells the hopes of avarice. Let us remember, too, that the joy of an approving conscience is but a foretaste of that recompense which awaits the man of integrity hereafter. Let us then, my brethren, go forward in the path which it points out to us, be it ever so thorny. Let us never tolerate ourselves in the slightest deviation from it. And in all the temptations which may beset us, let us never forget this promise of a faithful God; "Say unto the righteous, it shall be well with them, they shall eat of the fruit of their doings. But woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with them, and the reward of their hands shall be given unto them."

SERMON XI.

CONTENTMENT.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 11.

For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

THE life of the Apostle Paul, from the period of his conversion up to the moment when he made this declaration, had been one continued series of sufferings and toil. It had been passed in travelling from country to country in the service of the gospel, enduring every species of hardship, and encountering every extremity of danger and disgrace. He was assaulted by the populace, punished by the magistrates, scourged, beaten, left for dead. He expected, wherever he came, to meet with the same dangers and the same treatment; to be called on to make the same sacrifices of ease and pleasure to the cause which he had espoused. At the very moment when he wrote this epistle to the Philippians, he was held in prison at Rome; yet, unwearied by his long confinement, unsubdued

by anxiety, want, labour, persecution; unaffected by frequent experience of perverseness, prejudice, ingratitude, desertion; undismayed by the prospect of death itself, we hear the suffering Apostle calmly declare, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

This state of tranquil acquiescence in such evils is beyond measure enviable; and we must feel interested in ascertaining by what process of mind he had attained to it. We cannot indeed expect to enjoy all the sources of consolation, which the Apostle possessed; but, on the other hand, we are to remember, that we are not called on to endure the same trials. Many of the grounds of contentment, which we may suppose to have been present to him, are common to every thoughtful and believing mind; and it will be my object at this time to recal some of them to your remembrance.

It may be necessary to observe in the first place that we have no reason to think that the contentment of the Apostle arose from any peculiar felicity of natural temper. There is found in some men a constant disposition to look on the bright side of things; a certain spring and elasticity of temper which calamity cannot long press down; a buoyancy of spirit which rises above the waves of misfortune; an ever active fancy, which invests every object with gay and cheerful colours, and is never weary of creating visionary pictures of approaching felicity. But beside that this peculiar

amenity of temper is confined to a few, it can never be trusted in as a secure ground of contentment, even by its favored possessor. No habit or disposition is permanent and safe that is not raised on the solid and indestructible basis of principle; and instances are not wanting of those in whom a long series of disasters and disappointments has soured and destroyed this cheerful temper, and changed the gay and fond enthusiast into a severe and gloomy misanthrope.

Nor did the contentment of the Apostle arise from that torpor and inactivity of mind, those frigid and phlegmatic feelings, which make some men acquiesce in the evils of their condition, because they are too insensible to feel them with keenness, or too indolent to allow themselves to be made unhappy by them. It was something, which he had *learned*, not inherited from nature; a principle which was taught him by his religion, not given with his constitution; it was not the transient vegetation, which is called forth by the breeze, and cut down by the blast, but the solid and deep-rooted product of virtuous sentiment and holy affection.

In order to arrive at this state of unruffled contentment with our condition, it is necessary that we should begin by freeing ourselves as much as possible from the influence of artificial wants, and those desires which are produced by a comparison of our lot with that of others. Originally all our wishes are pro-

duced only by the actual wants of nature; but the refinements of society produce new desires and artificial passions, and we begin at length to feel wants in consequence of our wishes. Imagination stamps a value on many things which have no use but because we have agreed to value them, and they afterwards pass currently as the representatives of real goods. The actual and original wants of nature are few and easily supplied; and he who can learn to narrow his wishes to his necessities, will make a surprising deduction from the mass of human infelicity. To lessen the number of our desires is in fact the same thing, at least produces the same effect, as proportionably to increase the means of gratifying them; and he who can reduce his wishes within the limit of the real demands of nature, will place himself beyond the reach of by far the greater number of the usual sources of discontent.

In imitating the Apostle Paul in this respect however, we shall not be called on to contract our desires within the bounds of absolute necessity. There probably is not one within the sound of my voice to whom the goodness of God has not given all the important *conveniences* of life. To make any one of us, my friends, contented with his condition, it is only necessary that we should cease to compare what we possess with what has been given to others; to consider the real value of our blessings instead of thinking only how they might

have been increased. The fair question in examining the happiness or unhappiness of our condition is not whether we should not be happier with more, but whether we have not now enough for enjoyment; not whether more might not be desirable, but whether more is necessary. You say that you are less rich than your happier neighbour. It is not necessary in order to show that this is no ground of discontent, to prove that you overrate the advantages of riches, and forget the cares and anxieties which always accompany them. Let it be granted that they are as desirable as your imagination paints them, the question is not whether riches are good, but whether mediocrity is an evil; whether you may not be a rational, wise, and happy being, even though you should remain as you now are. This is, I conceive, the test which we are to apply to all our wants; and if we would do it fairly, I cannot say that all our wants would disappear, but I do venture to affirm that the number of them would be diminished beyond our expectation. If we would view life thus fairly and soberly, we should find that the evils, which were made so great by the false medium through which we had surveyed them, are far from being insupportable. The mists and fogs which caused human calamity to appear like a mountain, spreading its base to the horizon, and hiding its head in the clouds, would clear away, and we should see only an acclivity, which may slightly impede our progress, but which

with resolution and perseverance, we may easily overpass.

Another help to a contented disposition, is to learn to estimate the goods of life by their real value, and to think more of what we possess, and less of what we want. After all, the common blessings which we all in a greater or less degree possess, are really the most important. What is there, which can be put into comparison with the blessings of daily bread, and nightly rest, of sound bodies, and vigorous understandings, of society, of children, and parents, and brothers, and friends? Let us remember, too, that the greatest of all blessings are those which reside in the mind and are therefore in a great measure independent of external circumstances. It is our intellectual advantages alone, which, to the sober eye of reason, purged of the films of prejudice and folly, appear worthy of our solicitude. It is wisdom, virtue, integrity, an enlightened understanding, a well regulated heart, a delight in the exercise of justice and mercy; it is to learn to think rationally and nobly, to learn to govern ourselves, to conquer our lusts, to use our faculties according to the will of the Giver, to love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves, to acquire an habitual inclination to what is right and good, and great, and holy and pure, to make, in fine, the christian temper and the christian hopes familiar to our hearts;—this is to possess what alone is really good, what is im-

mortal as the mind itself, what no shock of misfortune can impair, and what we may still enjoy, even though we have neither riches nor greatness, nor power, nor even vigour nor health.

But though considerations like these, will sweep the list of human calamity of many of the most weighty evils of life, yet it must be acknowledged, that there will still remain some, which are too real, and too severe, to be explained away or disguised. A habit of contented acquiescence under these evils can be, I am persuaded, effectually produced, only by views which are peculiarly christian. The temper of humility, which the gospel labours so much to form in us, tends directly and powerfully to this end. The basis of all discontent is pride under some or other of its forms, or a belief that our condition is below our deserts. We are continually disposed by our tendency to vanity, to look at the bright side of our characters and the dark side of our condition, and, as has been somewhat pointedly said, it is almost as rare to find a man, who thinks he has too little merit, as to find one who thinks he has too much wealth or honour. But the murmur of discontent will be silenced, the moment it rises in the breast of any one, who has that deep sense which the gospel nourishes in every christian, of his own incapacity to judge of what is best for himself, or the whole system with which he is connected, and of his unworthiness to enjoy even the blessings which he still pos-

sesses. He surely who feels that he has all, and more than all, that he deserves, will never repine, though that all should be less than is allotted to many of his fellow beings.

But the great and unfailing ground of contentment to a christian, is laid in his love of God, and his confidence that all things are ordained by him for the wisest and most benevolent purposes. It is of the very nature of sincere love of God, to rejoice that his will is done on earth as it is in heaven. We feel it to be right that the purposes of the wisest and best of beings should be accomplished. We are sure that God denies us nothing which it would be truly good for us to possess. He who has given us so much, would give us more, if more would be truly a blessing. It was in this view of the divine government, and of the tendency of all events to the production of good, that the venerable Apostle found the secret of contented acquiescence under all the hardships of his condition. It was this which enabled him, though feeble with age, worn down by calamity and emaciated by imprisonment, to declare to the Philippians, "Since all the things, that have happened to me have fallen out to the furtherance of the gospel, and every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice;"—since the cause of my beloved Master is promoted by my privations and sufferings, welcome this toil, and want, and disgrace; welcome

these chains and this prison; for such a cause, and such a master, welcome all that man can inflict; welcome death itself.

Another source of contentment to a christian, and the last which I shall suggest, is drawn from the view of the purposes of his being, and the estimate of this life, which his religion teaches him to make. A christian feels that he is sent into this world but as a pilgrim and a stranger. The present is but a life of probation, a scene of discipline, a state for the formation of habits and feelings which are to be ultimately exercised and exalted in a future and spiritual state. The events of life are arranged by divine Providence in order to conduce to these purposes. We must sometimes be tried by adversity, in order that we may exercise the passive virtues, which christianity so much values. We must sometimes be called to the harder trial of prosperity, in order to put to the test the stability of our resolutions, and the strength of our holy affections. In this way, health and sickness, riches and poverty, success and disappointment, all the circumstances, which give the colouring to our condition, and according to which we are denominated happy or unfortunate, are really sent to us with the same wise design of exhibiting and improving the principles of our minds, and the feelings of our hearts. Take but the estimate which christianity gives you of this life; remember what it so solemnly declares, that "the things which are seen are

temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal;"—listen but to the voice of religious wisdom, which reminds you that "the fashion of this world passes away;"—and the inequalities of this life will lose their importance; the rising murmur of discontent will be checked; the pang of anxiety will be assuaged; the wounded bosom of sorrow will be healed, and the groan of despair will forever be silenced.

Meanwhile, the perpetual vicissitudes of this uncertain state, the peculiar trials and difficulties with which the life of a christian is chequered, and still more the humiliating remembrance of our own infirmities, should teach us to look forward with joy and expectation to that promised day, when the hard fought warfare of the christian soldier shall be ended; when the pilgrim shall arrive at his journey's end, and find that its toils are over; when the stranger shall reach his home; when he shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away forever. This hope is the pure and steadfast anchor of his soul amid the waves and storms of life; the star in the east which guides his steps towards his Saviour's mansions, and cheers him on his way; the pillar of fire, which, amid the dangers, perplexities, and errors, of that wilderness, the world, shines with bright and inextinguishable lustre, and will conduct him, if he faint not on his way, to the bosom of his Father and his God.

SERMON XII.

ORIGINALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM.

JOHN, VII. 15, 16.

And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

In order to conceive of the surprise, which the Saviour must have excited among his countrymen, it is necessary to forget the views of his character and doctrines in which we have been educated, and consider the circumstances under which he originally produced himself before his countrymen.

From a remote province of Palestine, we must recollect, a man in the appearance of a Jewish peasant comes forward, and advances a new and most extraordinary claim. He was about thirty years of age, and hitherto had excited attention only by the singular correctness with which he discharged the common duties of his station; except indeed, that his mother had treasured some very

remarkable occurrences, which attended his birth and early years. He appeared as the son of a carpenter; and as at that time the rudiments of literature were confined to an extremely small number, even in the higher walks of life, he must, from the circumstances of his situation, have been wholly deprived of them. He could have known no other books than the writings of Moses and the Prophets; he had no learned master to instruct him; he had visited no refined cities, listened to no profound philosophers, and apparently was possessed of no means of gaining more enlarged views than the rest of his countrymen, of the same rank in life with himself. Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, he comes forward with no less a claim than to be the Son of God himself, the Redeemer and destined Judge of the human race.

That such an idea should have entered the imagination of such a person would be sufficiently surprising to his countrymen; but their surprise must have arisen to amazement, when they saw that every thing in his words and actions corresponded to his claims. They saw the laws of nature yielding to his control. He stood over the grave of a dead man, and declared that he was the resurrection and the life; and to confirm his words, death instantly relaxes his grasp, and the grave gives up its prey. Having by this and similar displays of his power established his authority, he confronted the most learned and profound doctors of the Jewish law,

exposed their perversions, rectified their errors, and spake as never man spake, on the perfections of God, the duties of man, and the scenes of eternity. As they listened to his gracious words, his astonished countrymen, remembering his humble origin, exclaimed, "How knoweth this man letters," or as another evangelist has it, "whence has this man his wisdom, not having learned?" Jesus gives a reply which involves the divine origin of christianity, "my doctrine is not mine, but HIS that sent me."

Now, I think, it will be admitted, that if the case were really so; if our Saviour did really display such wisdom as in his situation no one could have acquired, the solution which he himself has given of it must be the only true one—its origin was divine. That this was the fact, I shall offer some reasons to show. In order to do this, it will not be necessary to insist at all on the external evidence of it; though that is much greater, than for any other fact of equal antiquity. We may confine ourselves to this single position, that such was the *originality* of the doctrines of Christ, that he could not have learned them from any human source. The originality, then, of the christian system, as illustrating the divinity of its claims, will be the subject of the present discourse.

1. The first mark of originality, which I shall notice, is, that before the time of our Saviour no one had ever conceived the idea of *a universal re-*

ligion. The institutions of Moses were in their nature local and temporary, and exclusively designed for a particular people. The heathen nations had each their appropriate tutelary Gods, and peculiar rites of worship; and none of their legislators seem to have extended their views beyond the people to whom they were called to give laws. The philosophers of antiquity, in the instructions which they gave in religion and morals, confined themselves to a small circle of chosen followers. So far were they from thinking of the good of all mankind, that the whole mass of the poor and illiterate, even of their own countrymen, was utterly overlooked and despised; and Socrates himself, the noblest name among them, did not even attempt to destroy the idolatry of Athens, or produce the slightest revolution in the general manners of his countrymen.

From the bosom of the Jewish nation—a people of all others the most narrow and exclusive, one of whose most remarkable characteristics it was to believe that their nation had a separate and peculiar claim on the divine favour—from among such a people as this, first proceeded the sublime conception of a religion, which should break down all national and local distinctions, and comprehend in its generous design the whole human race. "Go and teach all nations," said our Saviour, and the annals of time gave him no precedent for his words. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem

and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Others had attempted the improvement of individuals, of a single city, or a single nation; but it was reserved for a Jewish peasant to conceive the grand and divinely benevolent idea of a religion adapted to every rank, and nation, and age; to propose the emancipation of a world from error, superstition, and sin; to bring the whole family of mankind, Jew and Greek, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, to the throne of the Universal Parent. Whence, we may ask, had this man his wisdom, if it was not from above?

2. We may observe, as another mark of originality in the doctrine of Christ, that he gave the first *perfect system of human duty*, enforced by adequate sanctions. Although the popular religions of antiquity consisted of rights and ceremonies which had no proper connexion with morals, we must still admit, that if you look through the writings of many centuries, and select all the detached passages which are scattered through them, you may find nearly all the chief precepts of christian morals, though indeed always in company with many useless and bewildering speculations, and maxims fundamentally erroneous. But morality, as it has its foundation in the nature and condition of man, is not, properly speaking, an object of discovery. When, therefore, we say that our Saviour gave the first perfect system of moral and

religious duty, we mean not that he made discoveries in morals, but simply, that if before the New Testament was written, a man had desired to find a complete and unexceptionable compend of his duties to God, to himself, and to his fellow men, not only was there no such a compend to be found, but nothing which made an approach to it. There was no system in which God was distinctly represented as one God; the universal Parent, as well as moral Governor of his creatures; the object of their confidence and love; to whose will all their actions were to be referred;—no system in which it was made our duty and happiness to have in view, not our own interest and gratification alone, but the happiness and improvement of our fellow men; no system in which we were taught the obligation of the most universal and inviolable personal purity, extending not merely to our external actions, but to the thoughts and intentions from which those actions proceed; or in which, in fine, this life was represented as a scene of preparation for another, and the only adequate motive therefore was given to make us bear up against the violence of passion, resist temptation of present advantage, to support the hope of struggling virtue, and aid the confidence of suffering innocence. These are the great principles of the moral system of the gospel, which though they might have been separately recognized in some form or other, were never brought together and embodied in one comprehensive and

harmonious whole, till they fell from the lips of our Saviour.

Every thing in the detail of this system is worthy of its fundamental principles; perfectly intelligible, correct, consistent and complete. No genuine virtue is omitted; no false principle, no immoral maxim, is tolerated. Those passive and retiring virtues of humanity, forgiveness, humility, contentment, patience, resignation, so much overlooked and disdained before, are here for the first time brought forward into the rank of primary and essential duties. Those more dazzling qualities, which form what the world esteems the heroic character, are regulated, repressed, or else absorbed in more enlarged and less dangerous principles. No virtue in this system is carried to excess; no stress is laid on one, to the exclusion of others; no external rite is substituted in the place of moral goodness; no one duty of whatever rank and value, is permitted to supersede or atone for the absence of another; but every one finds its proper place, and is arranged in its proper order and connexion. It is a system, in its foundation and superstructure, in its plan and its details, so comprehensive and complete, that the wisdom of man, improved by the experience of ages, can find in it nothing which requires addition, or admits of improvement.

Now, what we remark as original and peculiar in this case is, not so much that individual virtues

are correctly taught, as that they are all brought together and digested into a perfect system, in which nothing is wanting, and nothing is superfluous. In order to feel how wonderful this is, we must recollect how little comparatively the wisdom of philosophy did actually effect. We may take the strongest case which can be put. Just before the times of our Saviour, Cicero wrote a book on the moral duties of man. He was profoundly skilled in the Greek philosophy, and was himself one of the most highly gifted of men. His book must therefore be considered as the last and most perfect result of unaided human reason. Without insisting on its want of authority, or the fact, that many genuine virtues, especially the passive and devotional ones, are wholly omitted, and that many false and equivocal qualities are extravagantly commended, it is enough to observe that it is fundamentally and essentially defective in this particular, that the obligation of virtue is never once placed on its proper ground—our relation to God; and that its practice is never enforced by the only adequate sanction—our relation to a future world.

Consider what a phenomenon is here! That, which all the wisdom of Greece and Rome was unable to effect, is consummated at a single effort by an unlettered peasant, educated amidst the malignant prejudices and narrow bigotry of the Jewish nation. If from one of the most obscure of our villages, a man wholly without advantages

should bring forward the complete system of the Newtonian philosophy, it would not reach the singularity of this case. Whence then had this man his wisdom? Admit his own account of it, that it was not his, but God's, who sent him, and every thing is easy and clear. Deny it, and you will have a moral miracle to account for, incomparably greater than any which christianity calls you to believe.

We have remarked that the gospel of Christ is original in the comprehensiveness of its design, and in the perfection both of its fundamental principles, its particular details, and its general plan. We might now proceed to show that the manner in which the gospel was introduced, and the means provided for its duration and defence in after ages, are also wholly original and peculiar. Both of these topics would afford many strong illustrations of the general subject of this discourse, but they open a field too wide to be at present occupied. Let us hasten to remark, in the last place, on *the originality of the character of our Saviour himself.*

3. We find in the life of Jesus an union of qualities, which had never before met in any being on this earth. We find embodied in his example the highest virtues both of active and of contemplative life. We see united in him a devotion to God, the most intense, abstracted, unearthly, with a benevolence to man, the most active, affectionate, and universal. We see qualities meet and harmonize in his character, which are usually thought

the most uncongenial. We see a force of character, which difficulties cannot conquer, an energy which calamity cannot relax, a fortitude and constancy which sufferings can neither subdue nor bend from their purpose, connected with the most melting tenderness and sensibility of spirit, the most exquisite susceptibility to every soft and gentle impression. We see in him the rare union of zeal and moderation, of courage and prudence, of compassion and firmness; we see superiority to the world without gloom or severity, or indifference or distaste to its pursuits and enjoyments. In short, there is something in the whole conception and tenor of our Saviour's character so entirely peculiar, something which so realizes the ideal model of the most consummate moral beauty, something so lovely, so gracious, so venerable and commanding, that the boldest infidels have shrunk from it overawed; and though their cause is otherwise desperate, have yet feared to profane its perfect purity. One of the most eloquent tributes to its sublimity that was ever uttered, was extorted from the lips of an infidel. "Is there any thing in it," he exclaims, "of the tone of an enthusiast or of an ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity, in his manners; what touching grace in his instructions; what elevation in his maxims; what profound wisdom in his discourses; what presence of mind, what skill and propriety in his answers; what empire over his passions! Where is the man, where

is the sage, who knows how to act, to suffer and to die, without weakness and without ostentation. When Plato paints his imaginary just man covered with all the ignominy of crime, and yet worthy of all the honours of virtue, he paints in every feature the character of Christ. What prejudice, what blindness must possess us to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the son of Mary. How vast the distance between them. Socrates, dying without pain and without ignominy, easily sustains his character to the last; and if this gentle death had not honoured his life, we might have doubted whether Socrates, with all his genius, was any thing more than a sophist. The death of Socrates philosophizing tranquilly with his friends, is the most easy that one could desire; that of Jesus expiring in torture, insulted, mocked, execrated by a whole people, is the most horrible that one can fear. Socrates, when he takes the poisoned cup, blesses him who weeps as he presents it; Jesus, in the midst of the most dreadful tortures, prays for his infuriated executioners.—Yes! if the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage—the life and death of Jesus are wholly divine."

Now let me ask whether, if for this perfect conformity with his own perfect precepts our Saviour had no model, not only among his own countrymen, but in the wide world; if nothing like it had ever before appeared, or been imagined; if we find in his situation not one external advantage

which could give the promise of such a character, but every thing most adverse to it; if we are unable to assign a single circumstance adapted to raise his mind above the depression of the grossness and superstition which surrounded him; must we not feel, that to say that this greatest and purest of all characters was at the same time the greatest of all hypocrites and impostors, is to assert a most glaring and absurd contradiction?

If you say, against all evidence, that this character is fictitious, and never really existed, you increase instead of lessening the prodigy. You make the histories of the evangelists the greatest wonder of human invention. That for the purposes of fraud, these simple and unlearned men should be inspired with powers for the most difficult of all the efforts of genius, the consistent and harmonious representation of a perfect character, cannot for a moment engage our belief. That ignorant Jewish impostors, without any model to copy from, should have succeeded in the delineation of a character so wholly original, placed in circumstances so various and new, especially where supernatural agency is introduced, is surely beyond all comparison more difficult of belief, than that the God of benevolence, in mercy to his children, should have sent his Son on the earth to realize such a character, and to teach us by his perfect example how we should live, how we should suffer, and a still harder lesson, how we should die.

Such are some of the grounds on which it is apparent that the gospel is a system altogether original, and unborrowed from any human source; and that its fundamental principles are such that it is impossible to suppose they should have proceeded from one under the circumstances of our Saviour, unless God had been with him. This, it is to be remembered, is a view of the evidences of christianity from but a single point; and one which has been but little noticed. If then the argument appears so strong when rested on this single ground, how great must be the accumulated evidences from history, from its prophecies, its miracles, its internal marks of credibility, and its universal conformity to the wants and feelings of mankind. If a single and almost neglected pillar of this temple be so strong, how vast, how august, how eternal must be the foundation on which it reposes!

SERMON XIII.

SAVING FAITH.

ACTS, X. 34, 35.

Then Peter opened his mouth and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.

We have here one proof, from among many, of the slowness with which the minds of the first disciples of our Lord were opened to the liberal and comprehensive spirit of his gospel. Educated with all the prejudices of a Jew, Peter had supposed that his own nation was the peculiar object of that divine favour, from which all others were entirely removed. The prayers and alms of an uncircumcised Roman must be, he had supposed, an abomination in the sight of God. He had thought, in all the pride of his nation's bigotry, that the universal Father of mankind had no grace to bestow on any, who had not the happiness to be born among the

children of Abraham. He never had dreamed that the privileges and hopes of the gospel were to be extended to those who had not subscribed to the creed, and conformed to the ritual, of the great Legislator of Judea. But his prejudices had not closed his mind to conviction; and God was pleased to grant him a proof, which he could not resist, that he was not the God of the Jews only—that he was not a partial respecter of persons or any peculiar people; but the just, the equal Parent of all the creatures of his hand. He now perceived that Cornelius, though born amidst the darkness of idolatry, and nursed in the lap of ignorance and error, yet, having used with fidelity the means and opportunities put into his hands, having reverenced the Divinity according to the best conceptions which he could form of his character, and having acted in conformity to the convictions of his conscience—that this pagan Cornelius was heard by the Supreme, and that his alms were had in remembrance before him. The Apostle was led by this proof of the impartial benignity of the Most High, to the great conclusion of our text; "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

The doctrine of the text evidently supposes, that in every nation and age, there exist the means of forming some idea of a God, and of the distinctions

of right and wrong. There is no human being to whom these great privileges are wholly denied. The image of a Power above us, to which we are responsible, exists under some form or other in every mind. The authority of conscience is felt in every breast. There is no speech nor language where its voice is not heard. Now the Apostle teaches us, that every one, in every nation, who faithfully uses the measure of light and knowledge imparted to him, however limited and imperfect it may be, will yet be finally accepted. A man will be judged according to that which he hath, and not according to that which he hath not. Those nations of the earth on whom the light of the gospel never shone, will not suffer from not complying with conditions of salvation of which they never heard. The Gentiles without the law of christianity are a law to themselves; and by their obedience or disobedience to the light which is given them, will they stand or fall at the great day of account.

However mysterious, then, may be that dispensation of Providence, by which so much inequality exists among the members of the human race, still we are *sure* that there is no injustice with God; He will condemn none for necessary ignorance, and He will punish none for involuntary error. The poor heathen, and the privileged christian will both stand before their Maker on equal terms; and each will be required to give an

account of the talents—and of those talents only, which his God has confided to him.

But it is not my present purpose to dwell on a point, which I am persuaded must be so clear to you all, as that God, the common Parent, is not less merciful and just to those of his children from whom he has withheld the gospel, than to those to whom he has given it. It is rather my desire to apply the principle of the text to the christian world. It seems to me that it may unfold some views which are consoling, under a sense of the fallibility and ignorance from which not even christians are exempt; and may lend some aid to our charity, as well as some light to our faith.

Whoever surveys, even slightly, the face of christendom, must be struck with observing the variety of opinions, which exist on many subjects connected with the gospel. He sees indeed some transcendent truths, which all alike unite in believing. But on many others, and those certainly most interesting ones, this unanimity vanishes. He sees the great communities of christendom arrayed under different banners, and the cries of those, who exclaim, "We are of Paul, and we of Apollos, and we of Cephas," overpower the milder accents of those, who profess that "they are of Christ alone." He finds almost every one of the principal sects laying the greatest stress on its own peculiarity. From the seven hills of Rome he hears it proclaimed, that within her Catholic and Apostolic

pale there can be no error, and without it no salvation. He sees other churches also, though professing to glory in that great Reformation, which was founded on the principle that it is the right and duty of every man to judge of religion for himself, with no responsibility but to God—yet, with a lamentable inconsistency, assuming the badge of infallibility which they had torn from the papal brow, and denying the name of christian to him, who will not measure his faith by their standard. Amidst this variety and discordance of opinion, the humble disciple is often perplexed and distressed. The question of Pilate "what is truth," bursts anxiously from his lips. How shall I know when I have found so much of it as is necessary for my salvation? How can I be certain, after my best endeavours to discover it, that I may not still fatally err, and lose all interest in my Saviour's promises? I see on all sides, in every communion, men of learning and integrity, of piety and benevolence, men who are incapable of intentional deception, and who have no imaginable motive to deceive. By what criterion shall I discover with which of them truth resides, and which of them may be followed without hazard to my salvation?

The Scriptures have not left us without the means of satisfying our minds on this interesting subject. We have in our text the assurance, that no man who inquires after his duty with the fear of God before his eyes, and who uses his best en-

deavours to perform it, will fail of final acceptance. Let us inquire more particularly into the meaning and extent of this principle.

There is nothing in it inconsistent with the repeated declarations of scripture, that we are justified by faith—that without faith, it is impossible to please God. All that it asserts is, that the value of faith depends not so much on the opinions which we hold, as on the spirit and temper with which we inquire for, and embrace them. It is not measured by the state of our understandings, so much as by the dispositions of our hearts. It is to be tested not so much by the kind or number of propositions which we believe, as by the practical and habitual influence of a few great principles, which no sincere inquirer after the truth as it is in Jesus can fail of attaining. Two things only are declared to be necessary to our final acceptance; first, that we should use the means of religious knowledge which are put into our hands, in the fear of Almighty God; and secondly, that we should act uniformly according to our best sense of right and duty. To fear God is to have an awe of the divine perfections; to cherish a sense of our accountability to him and to make his will our supreme rule, to the exclusion of all fear of man, and all worldly advantage. He therefore who opens the scriptures with this sentiment of reverence for God's authority, and uses all his lights and means to understand them; who faithfully acts in obedience to the dictates of

his duty so far as it is known to him; such a man, whatever may be the result of his inquiries, will have the essence of that faith which God will approve and accept.

To what other conclusion, indeed, could we have come, even if the scriptures had been silent on this subject? What other test of saving faith can there be, than that which is given by a sincere and conscientious employment of the means which God has put into our hands? If you make the criterion of justifying faith to be the accuracy of the results of our inquiries, without regard to the different capacities and opportunities of mankind, you make faith to depend on the state of the understanding; and then he who has the wisest head, not he who has the purest and humblest heart, will be saved. This is evidently opposed to the whole spirit of the gospel, and every one who believes in the justice of the Most High, is entitled to say that it cannot be true.

But still it may be said, "are there not some *essential* doctrines of the gospel, which every man must believe, who hopes for salvation; and the denial of which must forfeit his right to the christian name?" My brethren, this distinction between doctrines that are essential, and doctrines that are not essential, is one unknown to the scriptures, and which seems to me without any just foundation. *All* the doctrines of the scriptures are essential. They all rest on the same authority, and are all equally entitled to our reverence. But before any doctrine

can be obligatory, we must first have reason to believe it to be contained in the scriptures; and if, after an inquiry made in the fear of God, we do not find a given doctrine to be contained there, to *us* it is not essential. God will never mark it against us as sin, that we have not believed what we honestly think to be no part of his revealed will. Our ignorance and our errors, as far as they are involuntary, and do not arise from any wilful neglect of the means of God's grace, he will surely of his mercy forgive. It follows, that though all the doctrines of scripture are equally essential to him who knows them, all doctrines are not equally essential to all men. The objects of faith must be more or fewer, according to the different capacities, the different opportunities, the different means and advantages, with which God has favoured different men. What is essential to a christian, is not essential to a heathen. What is fundamental with one christian, may not be so with another. A truth which is essential to you, whom heaven has blessed with an enlarged mind, wise instructors, and an exemption from those hidden biasses which mislead in the search for truth, may not be essential to me, who am denied these privileges, and am unable, after my best efforts, to discover it. Those doctrines alone are equally essential to all christians, which all christians, who inquire after truth with sincere and upright minds, equally acknowledge to be the evident doctrines of the Bible. No one, who

searches the scriptures with the fear of God before his eyes, need fear that he will not infallibly arrive at every truth which is essential *to him*. If I could doubt this, christianity, instead of appearing to me a message of peace, of mercy, and celestial love, would become a subject of apprehension and dismay. For if it be possible, that one sincerely honest man may fatally err in his inquiry after his duty, then it is possible that every man may thus err. Who then, who had not a direct communication from heaven, could have any confidence that he did not misconceive the whole system of christianity, and was not plunging himself into remediless perdition?

Perhaps, however, we may be told that "truth is one—there can be only a right and a wrong, a true and a false belief, and that they only who have the true faith can hope to be saved." This sentiment would have no inconsistency in the mouth of a Mahometan, or an advocate for papal infallibility, but it does not become the lips of a Protestant. If the consequence which is drawn from the principle of the unity of truth were a just one, another consequence also would be equally just, which is this, that no one of the whole human race can be saved. Truth, in its abstract and elemental state, is undoubtedly simple; and in strictness, there can be only one view of it, which is a perfectly just one. But that view is taken only by Him who is infinite in wisdom, and not by weak

and erring mortals; not by us, "who know but in part." If it were true that they only can be accepted with God, to whose minds truth unfolds itself without any mixture of error, who, that is not exempt from all human infirmity, could presume to think himself secure?—But to escape from this conclusion, you may say, that a small degree of error in our conceptions will be pardoned, but not error which extends to essential doctrines. We answer, that if you admit that any degree of error is pardonable, the argument for the unity of truth is gone, and what is essential must be determined on other grounds. All the considerations which have been urged, return with all their force, to bring you back to the very position we defend, which is, that the value of a christian's faith, so far as he is himself concerned, will be determined by the dispositions with which he seeks for and embraces it, and not by its entire exemption from error. You admit that something is to be pardoned to human frailty and ignorance—and who but the searcher of all hearts shall determine, how great that allowance to any individual shall be?

The subject which we have thus considered, furnishes us with two inferences; one, as to the judgment which we should pass on our own belief; and another, as to the judgment which we should pass on the belief of others.

The great question in examining the state of our faith, is not whether it is metaphysically just and

exact; not whether it agrees with that of others; not whether we believe what our forefathers or any body else believed; not whether we embrace what men call orthodoxy or heresy. These questions are not unimportant, I allow; but they are nothing, when compared with such inquiries as these; with what fidelity have we sought to obtain truth; and what effects does our belief have on our practical conduct. If we can hope that we have faithfully and humbly used our means of knowledge; if we are true to the best convictions of our understandings, and the honest dictates of our consciences; if we can find in the habitual tenor of our lives the fruits of the Spirit; then we may meekly trust, that whatever our errors may be, they are those of the head, and not of the heart; and that God will not mark as guilt, the involuntary weakness of our understanding. But if our conscience tells us that we have not inquired for truth with the fear of God before our eyes, with a reference to his will, with humble prayer for the guidance of his Spirit, and with sincere dispositions and endeavours to live by the principles which we embrace, it will little avail us that we understand all knowledge and all mysteries. Though we may have embraced all the faith once delivered to the saints, we have not caught their temper with their creed. We have not charity, and we are nothing. We have not the spirit of Christ, and are none of his.

Our subject affords us, in the second place, an inference with regard to the judgment we should pass on the opinions of others. Since the dispositions with which men pursue and embrace truth, are known only to Him who knows the heart, the results of their inquiries furnish us with no test of their acceptableness with God. If the mere circumstance that they differ from us in these results be taken as this test, how many must we unchristianize of the holiest men the world has ever seen! How many must we banish from us, who can say, with the ever-memorable Hales, "For truth I have forsaken all hopes, all friends, all desires, which might bias, or hinder me from driving right at what I aimed. For this, I have spent my wealth, my means, my youth, my age, and all I have. If, with all this cost and pains, my purchase is error, I can safely say, to err hath cost me more than it has many to find the truth." The only criterion by which we are allowed to judge the opinions of others, is the influence of their opinions on their lives. How absurd then is it, to overlook entirely this criterion, and to make a man's abstract opinions on the most abstruse and difficult subjects in the world, the test of his christianity! What a departure from the spirit and end of all religion! What an endless source of dissension, and what deep and lasting dishonour are thus heaped on the christian name! It is melancholy to think how slowly mankind arrive at some of the simplest and

plainest of all truths; and how much it has been in the power of a few madmen to set the christian world on fire, and consume the fairest fruits of christian faith and hope and charity.

Do we then say that error is as good as truth; that it is of no importance what a man believes, provided he sincerely believes it? Far from it. Our faith is a part of our probation; and it is the very maxim I would urge, that we are responsible to God for the conduct of our understanding in every inquiry after truth, and most of all after religious truth. The doctrine of the text is simply that our power is the measure of our duty; and that when we have honestly exerted the best faculties we possess, our humble efforts will be accepted, and our imperfections will be forgiven.

Still it may be supposed, that the opinion, that our acceptance with God will be determined, not so much by what we believe, as by the manner in which we have gained that belief, would tend to diminish our zeal for the propagation of truth in the world. But let us only consider the different effects of truth and error on the minds, and hearts, and present happiness of men; let us only consider how thick and dismal is the night of ignorance; how stern and cruel is the reign of error, and we shall not want for motives to labour in propagating truth. Of what a progeny of evils is superstition every where the parent; what bloody rites, what senseless and burdensome ceremonies, what degrad-

ing views of our nature and of its Author, what debasing terrors, does she not inspire and produce! How are the noblest faculties of man subjugated to her yoke! And even in the christian world, who but must mark the different effects of truth and error? How many are the evils, which have flowed from misconceptions of the true nature of the simple and sublime system of the gospel. How wide the difference in the freedom, the knowledge, the elevation, the happiness, of papal and protestant nations. I might go on and rehearse the thousand evils of the different forms of religious error, and the ten thousand blessings of religious truth. But one single consideration is enough. Think only how important would be the consequence of a general diffusion of the single truth I am now endeavouring to urge. What woes would it not have prevented in other times, if mankind would have admitted, that others had a claim to think and to judge as well as themselves; and that their errors would be fatal only so far as the dispositions with which they cherished them were bad? What rivers of christian blood might not then have forborne to flow! How foul a stain on the christian cause might then have been saved! And even now, how many malignant passions, and uncharitable judgments, and unchristian impediments to the progress of inquiry and truth, would be avoided, if christians would but remember that error is not necessarily guilt. Who then, thinking thus of the

benign effects, which the spread of truth in its original purity and simplicity would produce, can want any motive to urge him to give his aid to its progress, and join in the noble task of pouring light into the darkened mind of ignorance, chasing away the phantoms of error, and imparting the blessings of christian truth! Who that would not rejoice to contribute in any degree to so glorious, so divine a work!

There is no inconsistency, then, between an enlightened and ardent zeal for truth, and all the charitable judgments on the religious state of others to which the doctrine of our text would lead us. Neither is there any want of the most powerful motives in our own case to be diligent in proving all things, and holding fast only what is true. Let us therefore use all diligence to add to our faith knowledge, as well as virtue. Its price is above rubies.

Let us concede the privilege we take; and while with all fair and honourable weapons we contend earnestly for what we believe to be truth, let us not forget that our Christian feelings are more important than our speculative opinions, and that the worst of all heresies is a bad heart, and an uncharitable tongue.

SERMON XIV.

STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 PETER, III. 15, 16.

Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

EVERY attentive and intelligent reader of the scriptures, must have felt the truth implied in this passage, that all the parts of the sacred volume are not equally easy of comprehension. That the fact should be thus, may at first view appear a thing strange and not to have been expected. It may seem strange that a professed revelation, or discovery of truths which were before obscure or unknown, should itself contain any thing difficult or dark, and of course liable to be misunderstood and perverted. And indeed with regard to

the great, elemental, practical truths of religion, those which most affect the heart and influence the life, we find, what we should previously have expected, that they all appear in characters of light; they are all perfectly plain and obvious to the humblest understanding. As it respects, however, the minor and subsidiary doctrines of the gospel, many of them, it must be confessed, do require study and attention fully to be comprehended.

In accounting for this partial obscurity we may say, that from the nature of written language, which is necessarily ambiguous and exposed to change, it was impossible to be avoided without a perpetual miracle. But though this answer is alone sufficient, we need not scruple to go farther, and to ask why, since no other advantage of body or mind is to be obtained in the ordinary course of Providence without labour, why should we expect that religion alone should descend supernaturally from the skies into minds, sluggish, incautious, uninterested, and unprepared for its reception? The wants of the mind, we may be assured, will no more be supplied without industry and activity on our part, than the wants of the body; and as the body we know will die, if we use no effort to sustain it by necessary food, so also the soul, if its powers are not brought into vigorous and steady exercise, will perish for lack of knowledge.

That the scriptures should have difficulties, then, which it requires study to remove, is no more than

what we might previously expect to find; and without question, what we do actually find. It appears also that the reason, why these difficulties are permitted to exist, is to prompt us to industry in our endeavours to understand them. But as every mode of studying them may not be equally judicious and profitable, and as we are bound to inquire for the best, it will be the object of this discourse to suggest some principles on the subject, which may serve to aid a plain reader of the Bible in understanding its contents, and applying them to practice.

I. In the first place, we are to consider, in reading the Scriptures, that every part of the Bible is not of equal importance to every christian; or in other words, that though it is profitable, yet that some parts are to be studied *more* than others. This proposition requires little proof, and will be assented to by every one, who thinks on the subject for a moment. The bible contains the records of several different dispensations of God to mankind, to the Patriarchs, to the Jews by Moses and the prophets, and lastly to all men by his Son the Saviour of the world. These all differ from each other, according as they were adapted to men in different ages, and under different circumstances. Each therefore has some things peculiar to itself, and some things which are not of universal application. For example, the whole ritual law of Moses, we all confess, lost its original obligation on

the introduction of christianity. It was only "a schoolmaster" says the Apostle, "to bring us to Christ." All the institutions of Moses, indeed, were adapted to a nation under the immediate government of God, and ordained by him to a peculiar destiny; and many of the principles which were to direct their conduct cannot be applied to men in our times, under so great a change of circumstances. But in the gospel we are to find that dispensation of God's will, which was peculiarly intended for us. There is to be found the religion of christians. There are the principles by which we all are at last to be judged. It is there we are to look for the great rule of our faith and practice. While, therefore, we read the Old Testament to learn the history of the doings of God to the nations of old; while we always find it fertile in instruction and interest, an invaluable and abundant source of pious thoughts, and consoling and elevating contemplation, we are to remember that all the maxims of conduct which we collect from it, are to be understood and applied with reference to that last and perfect revelation, which the Son of God has unfolded.

II. The New Testament, then, is to be taken as the primary rule of the christian's faith and practice. But we are led by our text to the following very obvious principle of interpretation, which ought to be kept steadily in view—that in reading the scriptures, we should begin with what is simple

and easy, and afterwards proceed to what is difficult; and always explain what is doubtful and dark, by what is explicit and clear. This rule appears to be almost too plain and too reasonable to need to be insisted on; yet it is one which has been very greatly disregarded. From that love of the marvellous, and passion for what is mysterious and obscure in religion, which belong to the human constitution, men are led to reverse this rule, and instead of explaining what is "hard to be understood" in the epistles, in conformity to what is clear in the gospels, they often distort the plain tenor of the gospels into a conformity with their doubtful deductions from the epistles. This is a spirit, however, against which, as lovers of christian truth, we are bound to be on our guard. Our everlasting interests are too intimately connected with understanding aright the terms of salvation, to allow us to indulge any fancies or predilections in our study of the Bible. We ought to begin our inquiries with the teachings of our Saviour himself, as they are recorded in the Evangelists; sit like Mary at our Master's feet, and hear *his* words. There we shall undoubtedly find the fundamental truths of religion, and find them expressed in the plainest language. "I call you friends," says our Saviour to his disciples, "for all things, which I have heard from my Father, I have made known unto you." It is true that he gave them promises of farther illumination after his departure, but this

must have referred to the dissipation of the Jewish prejudices which still hung over their minds and obstructed their understanding of the truth which they had already received, and not to any additions to the gospel scheme. For the Apostles never imply, that our Saviour himself did not teach the whole of the gospel; and to suppose that his teachings did not contain the great essentials of the revelation which he came to unfold, is to say, either that our Lord was ignorant of these doctrines, or that he designedly withheld them. Neither of these conclusions is to be for a moment entertained; and therefore, even though we may find nothing in the Evangelists to support those doubtful disputations on which some choose to insist, as the very essence of christianity, we need not hesitate to say that no doctrine, which is not plainly and clearly taught or implied by our Saviour himself, and is not to be found in the record of his life and doctrines, can have any claim to be numbered among the vital principles of christianity.

The reason for the distinction, which exists between the gospels and the epistles, as primary sources of faith, seems to be very obvious. Our Saviour's own instructions were intended equally for all mankind in every age. They are conveyed in the form best adapted to make them intelligible—a history of his life and teachings; and these have every claim to occupy the earliest and prin-

cipal attention of the disciples of Christ. But the epistles were written to particular christian communities, at Rome, at Corinth, at Philippi, &c., under circumstances peculiar to that age of the world, and the situation of christians, who were then only a small and persecuted sect, surrounded by Jewish and Pagan enemies. They were frequently written in answer to particular questions put by converts to an Apostle, and with primary reference to certain divisions of opinion which then existed; some of which are now wholly unknown, and others, especially that about the abolition of the Mosaic law, have long since been settled. Now it is very evident that letters written under such circumstances will contain some things, which though perfectly intelligible to the persons addressed, must be "hard to be understood" by persons in a distant age, and in a wholly different situation.

There are other reasons for the obscurity of Paul's epistles; particularly his peculiar character as a writer. It is difficult to follow the course of a mind so rapid and impassioned through the whole of one of his epistles, leaping as he often does from conclusion to conclusion, without giving you the intermediate ideas by which he arrives at them; sometimes so concise as hardly to permit a glimpse of his meaning, and sometimes presenting an idea under so many forms as almost to distract attention; intermingling in the same letter, allegory, metaphor, argument, invective, persuasion, ter-

ror, pity, and sarcasm. To follow the stream of the thoughts of such a mind, through periods labouring with involutions, disjointed by parentheses, and broken up by digressions, though a very interesting, is surely not an easy task. It is not with such writings as these, that those who have need of milk, and not of strong meat, should *begin* their inquiries after christian truth.

Do not imagine that these observations are to lead you to undervalue the epistles. They are intended merely to remind you that the disciple is not above his Lord, and to assert this general principle, that christianity is to be first best learned from Christ himself. They are designed to lead you to our Saviour himself, as the original fountain of all christian truth. The epistles are undoubtedly to be read with the greatest care and attention, and they will richly reward as much of both of them as you can give. There is nothing in them when fairly understood, which does not perfectly harmonize with the teachings of our Saviour. The apostles are always to be listened to as acquainted by divine illumination with the christian system, and when they profess to speak from the Lord, and do not, as they sometimes do, expressly say that they speak of themselves, they are to be reverenced as uttering the word of God. The writings of Paul, particularly, will be found more interesting the more they are studied. There is no writer who will more strongly impress

an attentive reader with the belief, that in all he says he is giving you the genuine workings of his heart, the convictions of his inmost soul. There are no writings more indisputably genuine; and none from which you can draw more powerful arguments for the truth and divinity, the glory and perfection of that religion, of which he was the eloquent and devoted defender.

III. The principle of interpretation of which we have been speaking, that we ought in our study of the scriptures to begin with what is simple and easy, and afterwards proceed to what is more difficult, might be farther illustrated and applied, not merely to particular books, but to individual passages. But I must hasten to another observation, which is, that in order to understand any part of the scriptures, we must attend to the *subject* on which the writer is treating, and the *connexion* in which it stands. The necessity of this rule you will at once perceive by recollecting how easily any one's writing or conversation may be misunderstood, if detached parts of it only are repeated, without the explanations and limitations with which they were accompanied. A man may be made in this way to say exactly the reverse of what he really meant, and yet his language may be correctly quoted.—Or to use another illustration, suppose you were to receive a long letter from a person in a distant country, on some unknown subject; and that you should begin, before you read it, with dividing

it into sixteen nearly equal parts, and then subdividing these parts into several hundreds of others of two or three lines in length. If now each of these little fragments should be read as if it contained a whole and complete meaning in itself, without any regard to the general subject of the letter, or any attention to the connexion in which it stands, could you wonder that the meaning of your correspondent should be found with difficulty? Indeed can you think of any method of making a writer unintelligible more effectual than this? Yet this is exactly what has been done with every part of the sacred writings. This is one reason why the followers of every sect are all able to quote passages of scripture, which appear to be in favour of opinions the most various and discordant. Indeed with such a mode of studying the scriptures it is only wonderful that the number of sects is so small; for there is no absurdity so great that it may not in this way find the appearance of support.

When therefore you find any opinion supported by a great number of texts of scripture, you are not merely to inquire whether they are actually copied from the Bible, but whether they have any such meaning in their original connexion as that which they are brought to support. In this way you will often find that writers who boast of the formidable array of scripture proofs which they bring for their peculiar opinions, and who even

venture to identify them with the word of God itself, have really no other support for them from the Bible, than is given by the mere sound of the words which they use.

This subject well deserves to be more fully illustrated. I will merely remark that these observations are not intended to prove, that we are to make no use of the chapters and verses into which, of late years, the scriptures have been divided. When you are reading merely to make the heart better, and to have trains of pious thoughts awakened, it may often be useful to read only small portions of scripture at a time. But when you are inquiring for the support which the Bible lends to any particular tenets, it is necessary that you should read, for instance, the letters of Paul, as you would any other epistles. You should read all that relates to the same subject at once; attending to the whole design and drift of the writer; seeking to find the peculiar circumstances of the church to which it was originally addressed, and how far they are applicable to ourselves; remembering that every truth is consistent with every other truth. In this way, comparing scripture with scripture, using the best lights which God has given us, and above all asking his blessing on all we do, we need not fear that any thing important to salvation will remain doubtful or obscure to the humblest understanding. Some things may indeed remain which we cannot at present fully apprehend, but to these

we may apply the direction of the son of Sirach. "Seek not out those things which are too hard for thee, neither search the things that are above thy strength. But what is commanded thee, think upon with reverence; for it is not needful for thee to see with thine eyes the things, which are in secret. Be not curious in unnecessary matters; for more things are showed unto thee than men understand."

I will add but one more observation, which is indispensable to be remembered by every one who hopes to understand the scriptures, and drink from them the sincere milk of the word. It is that you must bring to your study of the Bible, a serious, impartial, honest mind. This will give you the best commentary on every doubtful passage, and without it you may wrest the plainest parts of the scriptures, as well as the most difficult, to your own destruction. We must bring to this study a deep conviction of its importance; a recollection that it is for the truth which God himself has revealed, that we are inquiring; and that each of us has a personal and eternal interest in this truth. Let us not examine religion as a curious theory which has no bearing on our own conduct; but as a system of truth by which our lives here are to be governed, and our conduct is to be judged hereafter at the bar of Christ. Let us not, as we read, inquire how this or that passage applies to our neighbour, but ask what it teaches to ourselves; what duty

does it point out to us, of what sin does it convince us, against what danger does it warn us, what change in our lives does it require of us? Let us bring to our inquiries a disposition to submit to the teaching and will of God. Let us lay aside all previous biasses, all preconceived opinions, all favourite prejudices, and inquire not what is orthodox, or what is liberal, but what is true. Let us come with humble, candid, docile minds and with the prayer of David upon our lips; "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea I shall keep it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein is my desire."

SERMON XIV.

BOOK OF JOB.

JOHN, v. 39.

Search the Scriptures.

In a recent discourse on the best mode of studying the scriptures, one rule was mentioned as of particular importance, and some farther illustrations of it were promised. The rule related to the necessity of attending to the *subject* of the different books of scripture, and the *connexion* in which each passage quoted from them stands; or in other words of regarding the *general scope and tendency* of all the sacred writings. The importance of observing this rule, in opposition to the common practice of considering each of the little fragments or verses into which these writings have been broken as a distinct and independent aphorism, was illustrated by several considerations.

In addition to what was then said we now remark, that if this division had been ever so carefully made, it would still have a tendency to de-

stroy the connexion and coherence of the various parts of the discourses of the sacred writers. But in truth it was made with a degree of negligence, which on a subject of so much importance is quite surprising. It may not be a fact familiar to you all—that it is wholly a modern invention; that in the ancient manuscripts of the scriptures the present arrangement of chapters and verses was unknown; and that it was originally made by the second printer who ever published an edition of the New Testament, while he was performing a journey. The consequence of the negligent manner in which this was done is, as might be supposed, that these divisions often begin and end at the wrong place; and if they are regarded in studying the scriptures, they will often interrupt and misrepresent the meaning of the writers. Indeed if the Bible should always and only be quoted by these verses, there is scarcely any absurdity for which you would not find the appearance of support in it.

It is therefore obviously necessary, if we would understand aright the sacred writings, that we should inquire after the whole scope and meaning of them, and of course for every thing which can throw light upon them. This, it is true, is not equally necessary for all; and the humble and merely practical christian may read them very profitably without engaging in these difficult inquiries. But if you must form opinions on those subjects on which christians are divided—and this is

the right, and, where there is the requisite leisure and facilities, the duty of every christian—you must qualify yourselves for it by going through the requisite researches.

I propose to give a general idea of the manner in which this should be done by selecting a particular book, and giving an outline or analysis of its contents. I have chosen the *Book of Job*, as one by no means the most difficult, and one on which the observations to be made may be brought within a small compass. Let us then inquire who was the author of this book ; what there is peculiar in the manner of its composition ; and what are the general truths, which it is intended to inculcate.

This book is by some critics supposed to be the oldest of the whole canon of the scriptures, and is certainly, by the confession of all, of very great antiquity. From the length of Job's life, which seems to place him in the patriarchal times ; from the general air of antiquity which is spread over the manners recorded in this poem ; from the fact that no piece of history later than the time of Moses is mentioned in any part of it ; from the allusion made by Job to that species of idolatry alone, the worship of the sun and moon, which is undoubtedly the most ancient ; from certain customs referred to of the most remote usage, such as the mode of writing by sculpture, and the circumstance of reckoning riches by the number of cattle ; from these and other particulars, the great

age of this poem seems to be correctly inferred. Its author, it is commonly supposed, was Moses himself; though from the circumstance that there is no allusion to any part of the Levitical law, it has been thought by some to be of even higher antiquity. As, however, the scriptures are silent upon this subject, it is a point which cannot be decided, and is indeed of little moment.

Like the book of Psalms, all except the narrative part of this work is written in poetry. It abounds with passages of the highest sublimity and the truest pathos. It is in the form of a dialogue, and the speakers are six in number; Job himself, three aged men, his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, and a young man, also his friend, named Elihu. Last of all, the word of the Lord is introduced, as deciding the subject on which the conversation has turned. This subject appears to be, in general, the reason of the permission of suffering and trial under the government of a God of benevolence; and how far the particular calamities which fall on each individual are to be esteemed judgments for their sins, and marks of the divine displeasure.

The narrative of this book is exceedingly simple. The principal object held forth to our contemplation, is the example of a good man, eminent for his piety, and of approved integrity, suddenly precipitated from the very summit of prosperity into the lowest depths of misery and ruin; who, having first been bereaved of his wealth, his pos-

sessions, and his children, is afterwards afflicted with the anguish of a loathsome disease, which entirely covers his body. He sustains all, however, with the mildest submission and the most complete resignation to the will of Providence. "In all this," saith the historian, "Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

This is the point of view in the conduct of Job, which is held forth as an example; and not, I conceive, his subsequent conversations with his friends, whose bitter reproaches and unjust suspicions he seems scarcely to have sustained with equal firmness. They came to visit him in his affliction, with the avowed purpose of giving him consolation. But when the severe calamity of Job extorts from him execrations on the hour of his birth, and on the kindness, which by rescuing him from the dangers of infancy and youth, had prevented him from being committed to an early grave; instead of seeking to soothe his sorrows, they all unite in questioning his integrity, and asserting that the fact of his suffering was a sufficient proof of his guilt, since God does not inflict such judgments on the righteous. These unjust and cruel attacks seem to have been too much for the miserable man to support. He in reply enumerates his sufferings, and complains bitterly of the inhumanity of his friends; asserts most vehemently the innocence and integrity of his life, and seems even to arraign the justice of God in confounding the distinction be-

tween the wicked and the good, by making them equally exposed to suffering. His friends severally rejoin, till all of them have spoken twice, and one of them three times, Job replying to each.

In this stage of the controversy, Elihu, who had hitherto preserved a respectful silence, is introduced as speaking. He is represented by the sacred historian as displeased both with Job and his three aged friends. With Job, because he seemed righteous in his own eyes, and justified himself rather than God, that is, because he defended so vehemently the justice of his own cause, that he seemed in some measure to arraign the justice of God; and with his three friends, because, though they were unable to answer Job, they ceased not to condemn him, that is, they concluded in their own minds that he was suffering the consequence of some great impiety and wickedness, notwithstanding they had nothing to oppose to his appeals to the uniform innocence and integrity of his life. His speech is directed principally to Job. He reproves him for having attributed too much to himself, and doubted of the providence of God, because it was mysterious. He asserts that it is not necessary for God to explain and develope his counsels to men, and that they ought to be satisfied with the belief of his perfect wisdom and goodness. He tells him that when the afflictions of the just continue, it is because they do not place a proper confidence in God, ask relief at his hands,

patiently expect it, nor demean themselves before him with becoming humility and submission. This, he asserts, is at once a sufficient reproof of the contumacy of Job, and a full refutation of the unjust suspicions of his friends. Lastly, he explains the purposes of the Deity in chastening men, which are in general to prove and to amend them, to repress their arrogance, and call forth the highest virtues of the human character. This consideration he makes the ground of an eloquent exhortation to Job to humble himself under the hand of his righteous Judge, and adore his almighty power and majesty.

The discussion which forms the subject of this book, is at length most solemnly closed by the introduction of the decision of the Almighty himself. He ratifies the reasonings of Elihu. He reminds Job of the weakness and ignorance of man, and demands whether he who is so unable to comprehend those works of creation which are obvious to every eye, the nature and structure of the earth, the sea, the light, the animal kingdom, shall presume to arraign the wisdom of the divine government, or comprehend all the purposes of his providence. "Hearken unto this, O Job; stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine? Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge?"

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding." "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened, or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

These questions are too weighty for human solution, and the humbled and astonished Job sinks down beneath the rebuke of his Maker, repents in dust and ashes, and exclaims, "Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth."—His penitence is accepted, and his former prosperity restored and augmented.

This rapid outline or analysis of this most striking poem, will, I hope, assist you in forming a judgment on the principal and leading truths which it is meant to inculcate. It remarkably illustrates the importance of the observations with which the discourse was introduced, on the necessity of attending to the general scope and design of the sacred writings, and not merely to the apparent sense of particular verses or peculiar phrases. It is easy to see how unsafe it must be to argue from the speeches of either of the friends of Job, except Elihu, in support of any doctrine which they may appear to countenance, when it is the whole object of the book to show that their views of life, and of the providence of God, are fundamentally erroneous. Yet you must all have met with instances, in writers of no mean name, of arguments

founded on these very passages, as if they were, equally with the others, intended to impress the same truths. Can it then be wondered at, that differences of opinion should exist among christians about the meaning of the scriptures, when principles of interpretation, so obvious and indisputable, are overlooked or disregarded?

That this danger of which we speak, is not an imaginary one, it would be easy to give many proofs. There is one, which is very remarkable. The two passages, which are most frequently and confidently relied on to prove the absolute depravity of the human heart, are the following, from the fifteenth chapter of this book, fourteenth and sixteenth verses. "What is man, that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous." "How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water."—Now it is not my present object to inquire how far this doctrine is true. He knows nothing of himself, who does not feel his liability to sin, and who is not aware of the lustings of the flesh against the spirit, and of the senses against the better dictates of the mind. But this conviction of our tendencies to sin is a very different thing from the belief that the soul comes from the hand of God steeped in guilt and sin, "rotten," as some love to speak, "to the very core;" that the infant who smiles in your face, one of those whom our Saviour himself took as the emblem of innocence and docility, has

yet the heart of a demon, and only wants the power to do the work of a demon. This doctrine of innate and total depravity, though doubtless many are led to think they believe in it from very pure motives, I do not scruple to say, appears to me a libel on human nature, and on the Author of human nature; it appears to me to be completely destructive of the responsibility of man, and to render the condition of the brutes that perish a more enviable one than his. The proofs however which are brought to sustain it, it would be foreign to my present purpose to examine. I would only remark how wholly unjustifiable it is to quote the two passages which I have mentioned—and they are always put at the head of the list of its proofs—as lending any support to it. They are part of the speech of Eliphaz the Temanite, to whom the Lord says at the close of the book, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for *ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right*." It is clear that a cause must be desperate, which resorts to such arguments as these.

I cannot dismiss this subject without a few practical remarks. The first general impression, which the study of this sublime book will have on a devout and serious mind, will be, that those conclusions are unjustifiable, which refer every instance of calamity which falls on our neighbour, to the judgment of God for his sins. There has been a

disposition among mankind in all ages, to form such conclusions with regard to the course of Providence. The age is not very remote from our own, when it was part of the established law of almost every country,t hat appeals should be made to the immediate judgments of Providence for the proof of innocence or guilt ; and the magistrate looked on at such trials with the expectation of seeing the innocent man tread unhurt on the burning iron. This disposition is even now not wholly extinguished; and there are some who, like the friends of Job, do not fear to erect themselves into interpreters of God's will, and judges of the secret merit or guilt of his creatures. It is a disposition of very mischievous consequences. It is more than once expressly reproved by our Saviour himself. It not only nourishes in ourselves a spirit of arrogance and persecution, but tends to shake in the minds of others the belief of any superintending Providence whatever.

The other sentiment which the perusal of the book of Job will inculcate, is that of perfect submission to the will and government of God, however mysterious they may sometimes appear to us. It is one great object of this production to show that the nature and particular reasons of the divine counsels in the dispensations of happiness and misery in this life, are placed by the necessary limits of human knowledge beyond our comprehension. As far as our observation extends, there is nothing in nature, which tends originally and finally to evil.

What reason then is there to doubt that the same benevolence would always be visible, if our views were more extensive? Is it for feeble and erring man to judge of the ways of Him, who is perfect in wisdom? Shall the dim eye of a creature so poor and weak be turned with reproach, or shall its feeble voice be raised in murmurs, against its Creator, because it is unable to comprehend what Omnipotence alone can fully embrace? Shall an insect so small as to be scarcely visible in the vast Temple of Nature, presume to judge of the harmony of its proportions, and arraign the great Architect because it imagines it here discovers a blemish or there an irregularity?—My friends, let us learn a lesson from the history of Job. Let us be reminded of our ignorance and insignificance, our feebleness and dependence, and we shall blush to remember our arrogance. We shall sink down in silence, humility and submission, at the footstool of his throne. The ways of God are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts.

There are many other respects in which we shall find the intelligent study of this book profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Let us then learn like the Psalmist, to meditate on the precepts that have respect unto the ways of the Lord, to delight in his statutes, and not to forget his word; and with him to pray, that God would open our eyes, that we may see wondrous things out of his law.

SERMON XVI.

SOURCES OF SIN.

1 CORINTHIANS, X. 12.

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

THIS precept of the Apostle evidently takes it for granted that there are constant, deep, and powerful tendencies to sin in the human constitution. It is addressed to us all, my friends. So far from considering any one as so safe, that watchfulness is no longer necessary, it is implied that he who thinks himself the least in danger is the most eminently insecure. Since then we are encompassed with temptations, and our frailty exposes us continually to their power, it is alike our duty and our wisdom to examine with care the nature and the sources of our danger. We should often look within and without us, and inquire where it is that seduction lurks in ambush for us, and where it is that the safeguards of our virtue are weak and unsound. "Watch and pray," saith our Lord, "lest ye enter

into temptation. What I say unto you, I say unto all—watch."

It is very important, however, that our conviction of the sins and dangers to which we are exposed should be something definite and distinct. It should be something much more than the vague and general impression with which some men content themselves that "nobody is perfect," "the best men have their weak sides," "every one has his fault." Neither on the other hand is it enough that we are willing to talk gravely of "the depravity of the human heart," "the vileness of our corrupt nature," "its rottenness to the very core." Notwithstanding the lofty claims to humility, which are made by some of those who use this language, it is still very possible to deceive ourselves by the use of it. It is very possible, that all these phrases may be very regularly and constantly repeated, without any proper sense, any practical conviction, of the real propensities to sin, which exist in our nature. In truth, I believe that it not unfrequently happens with many who are most fond of speaking in general of the utter corruption of their nature, that they are not found to be more willing than others to be suspected of a tendency to any particular sin.

But on such a subject as this, the language of extenuation or exaggeration is equally misplaced. We ought all to wish to know the truth, the exact truth. It can be no man's real interest in *this* life

to deceive himself or others; and in a *future* one, how fatal will he find a voluntary and cherished delusion to have been! Let us then, my brethren, look honestly and faithfully into our own hearts. Let us study the true tendencies of our constitution. Let us seek to find in what our danger really consists.

You have often been invited in other discourses to consider the nature and dangers of particular sins. In the present discourse it is my wish to take a view of the principal sources of evil that are found in the human constitution. We may learn from it a salutary lesson of caution and humility. At the same time I shall consider it my duty to endeavour to show that the guilt of each of our sins is all our own; and that there is no part of our nature, as it proceeds originally from the hands of our Maker, which is unworthy of its divine Author. God made man upright; but *they* have sought out many inventions.

The first source of sin to which our attention is naturally directed, is that which arises from the part of our nature which we share in common with other animals. We are prompted to transgression by *our appetites*. It is not that they are not useful, necessary, and perfectly innocent in their original purposes; but if we neglect or abuse them, a powerful tendency is produced in them to excess and disorder. In the lower creation the cravings of appetite are regulated by instinct, and the desire of

gratification dies when the real wants of nature are satisfied. It is otherwise with man. He is entrusted—and it is a noble charge—with the care of his own happiness, with the task of self-government. The precise limit of gratification, therefore, is not marked for him by instinct; it is left to be discovered, and to be fixed, by himself. Originally to find and to keep this limit is not difficult. Our nature, in this respect, as it comes from the hands of its Maker, is not found with any strong and invincible bias to transgression. Our appetites acquire their dangerous power only by neglect and voluntary and unnatural indulgence, and then indeed they become a prolific and fatal source of sin. There is a degree of pleasure annexed to the gratification of them—a pleasure bountifully given, and capable of being innocently used. But when this pleasure is pursued extravagantly, when it is made an end of our being, we suffer the penalty of violating the laws of virtue. Disorder is introduced into our system. A habit of yielding to their power converts them from the useful servants of man, into the lawless tyrants of his soul. A love of strong sensation becomes at last the primary pursuit, the ruling desire of our nature, and bears down all nobler, purer, and holier aspirings of the soul. Whether it displays itself in a life of dissolute luxury, of brutal intemperance, or degrading voluptuousness, it is fatal to all our best hopes of happiness, here and hereafter. It produces that

carnal mind, which is death ; that sensual disposition, which is enmity to God. So terrible a source of evil may that part of our nature become, through our neglect, which was given us by our Creator for purposes the most beneficial and wise.

Our animal nature is found to be a source of sin in another way. It is a powerful obstacle to good, as well as a direct source of transgression. The objects of sense are continually soliciting our attention, and laying hold on our affections. From our earliest infancy we are surrounded by, and as it were, immersed in them. They present themselves spontaneously to our view, and with a degree of vividness and force, which gives an air of unreality to those things which are visible only to the eye of the mind. Hence we are in such constant danger of having our thoughts centre on the objects of this world. The pure and intellectual truths of religion are perpetually liable to be shut out from the mind, by the overwhelming influence of the objects which the senses press upon our attention. The senses weigh down the spirit. It is hard for the mind to withdraw within itself, to shut out the objects of sense, to disengage itself from the body, and to hold a sacred and undisturbed communion with the unseen world. This is the reason why to *think* on God, and Christ, and the eternal world, is so difficult ; and why it is so much harder still to fix our affections on them, to make them the supreme objects of regard. This is the

reason why we so naturally give our hearts to the fleeting objects of sense, and are so untouched by the resplendent glories, the boundless bliss, of heaven and futurity. It is in this view that the Apostle declares, "I know that in me dwelleth no good thing." There is nothing in my animal nature, which is virtuous, or which can take the stamp of virtue. Nay more; "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." "There is a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, so that when I would do good, evil is present with me."

It is not the purpose of this discourse to inquire into the powers of counteracting this indisposition to spiritual contemplation and spiritual affection. It would be easy to show that they exist, and are adequate, by God's grace, to their objects. But my wish is simply to unfold the sources of those sins which we see exist, and point out the nature and operation of those causes which lead us to evil. It is the dangers of our state which I would now point out, and it may be my grateful task hereafter to invite your thankfulness for those means of avoiding them with which we are supplied.

We see then, that from the body—from that part of our nature which we have in common with the lower animals—our liability to many of the most degrading sins proceeds. We trace to its influence, primarily and chiefly, the sins of gluttony, of intemperance in all its forms, of the grosser

kinds of luxury, and in general of the long and dark list of sensual sins, together with very much of that indisposition and reluctance to the contemplation of what is spiritual and pure, of which we are all so conscious. Let us now proceed to consider those sources of sin, which are found in the mind—in that part of our nature, which distinguishes us from the lower creation.

Those active principles of our nature, which have their origin in the mind, have been variously named and classed. I am little studious of a philosophical accuracy, being desirous only to refer you in as plain a manner as I can, and only so far as the subject requires it, to the chief facts and laws of our moral constitution. The arrangement, which seems best fitted for this end, is that which distributes these active principles into *Desires* and *Affections*, and gives to either, when they pass the limits of moderation, the name of *Passions*.

The principal desires which seem originally to belong to our nature, are the desire of *knowledge*, or the principle of curiosity—the desire of *esteem*—the desire of *power*, or the principle of ambition—the desire of *superiority*, or the principle of emulation—the desire of *society*, or the social principle—the desire of *well-being*, or the selfish principle.

Before speaking of these desires as sources of sin, it is right to remind you of their importance to the perfection of our nature, as the means of being and doing good. We may learn their value by con-

sidering what we should be without them. How innocent and laudable then, in itself, is the principle of curiosity; and what would man be, if no trace of it existed in his breast, and he were prompted to attain knowledge only by a perception of the actual wants and necessities of nature? What could supply, in infancy and youth particularly, the place of a principle, always strongest in the most capacious minds, which urges them on to perpetually new acquisitions? Curiosity is to the mind, exactly what hunger is to the body, and how wholly inadequate would be the force of mere reason, if either of them depended for its supplies only on its slow and uncertain deductions?

Nor could the desire of esteem be more safely spared. Nothing surely can be more innocent and useful in its nature, than a desire of the regard of our fellow men. We see the dawnings of this principle in the earliest infancy; and the child is sensibly mortified by any expression of neglect or contempt, even before it acquires the use of speech. Its influence is at all times more striking, perhaps, than that of any other active principle whatever. Even the love of life daily gives way to the desire of esteem; and of esteem too, which, as it is only to affect our memory, cannot be supposed to interest our self-love. Suppose now this powerful principle struck out of our nature. Suppose we had no desire of each other's esteem, and were profoundly indifferent to the opinions of all

mankind concerning us. Is it not evident, not only that an incentive which enters so largely into the motive for the most meritorious toils and noblest sacrifices, would be lost, but that there would go with it, one of the most powerful instruments of social order and gentleness, one of the most salutary restraints on the rash excesses of human depravity, and one of the most effectual safeguards even of the existence of society.

The desire of power or the principle of ambition, and the desire of superiority or the principle of emulation, will perhaps be thought to be of a more equivocal worth. In their nature, however, there is certainly nothing which is necessarily bad. The mere pleasure and exultation, which the consciousness of possessing power imparts, is innocent in itself, and may be highly beneficial. So too the mere desire of superiority is not illaudable in its nature; and it is surely possible to conceive, that emulation may take place between men, who are united by the most cordial friendship, without a single sentiment of ill-will disturbing their harmony. The value of both these principles as springs of human improvement will be confessed. We see at once, that if neither ambition nor emulation existed, the most beneficial energies of man would be struck with a fatal palsy, and the world would remain for ever at one dead and dreary level of hopeless mediocrity.

The inestimable value and perfect innocence of

the desire of society, need no commentary or proof. We can scarcely conceive that the system of life should go on without it; or if it could go on without any union of effort, of council, or affection, still man, the solitary savage, would at best only draw out a few years of a forlorn and miserable existence.

In fine, even the selfish principle, the desire of personal well-being, which we all feel so strongly, how could this be spared from our constitution, without utter ruin? What is there bad in a rational regard to our own welfare? And what sort of a being would he be, if he could exist at all, who had no degree of love for himself? What shallow metaphysicians then are those, who instead of aiming to regulate self-love, as a principle useful and innocent in itself, denounce every degree of it as sin, and would vainly seek to extirpate a sentiment, which is necessarily interwoven with the existence of every intelligent being.

Thus much of the innocence and usefulness of our desires, as they are originally implanted in our constitution. Let me now endeavour to show in what way they become sources of sin. They are, we must remember, blind and undiscerning; they are simply direct *tendencies* towards particular objects, without distinction of the means by which they are to be obtained. They do not possess, therefore, any more than the appetites of the body, an instinctive power of self-guidance and

self-control. That is left to be the task of man himself. They have, too, when indulged without caution and foresight, a tendency to increase, to gather strength, and finally to rush into excess and extravagance. In a word, these desires, if habitually cherished, gratified and indulged, without watchfulness and care, are converted into passions, and become the guilty instruments of sin.

But it is not by their own excesses alone that the desires become the sources of transgression. It is found that when habitually indulged, they combine together, and become the parents of new and artificial desires. The love of money, for example, is no original part of our nature. It is produced by the compounded influence of the desire of esteem, of power, of superiority, and of personal well-being, associating and confounding the means of happiness with happiness itself. It is thus by making the means and instruments of good the primary objects of pursuit, that they become the primary objects of affection; and though all innocent in themselves, and all originally capable of being completely gratified by innocent objects, do yet enkindle within the soul sentiments which nature never planted there—the horrible sentiments of pride, envy, jealousy and malignity.

The process by which these artificial desires and passions are engendered, cannot now be detailed; nor can it be attempted here to recount the modes in which they join the original principles

of our nature, in producing those vices which darken and dishonour the history of our species. The time would fail me, or I might else attempt to show the effects of the extravagance and madness of unbridled desires. I might show how even the desire of knowledge, though in itself so innocent and useful, may occupy the breast too exclusively and become the active minister of evil as well as of good. I might show how the love of esteem first degenerates into a passion for admiration, destroys the mind's independency, and leads at length to the sacrifice of conscience and principle, to gain the vain tribute of the world's applause. I might show how the desire of power and the love of superiority, when fostered and indulged, swell the bosom with arrogance and pride, torture it with envy, and convulse it with jealousy, lead men to trample on the rights of others, and to commit deeds of atrocity, at which the world gazes with horror and fear. I might show, too, how the social principle may be abused; and in speaking of the effects of sympathy and imitation, when left undirected, might point out to you the inlet of floods of corruption among men. It is but to name the selfish principle, to remind every one of the most prolific nurse of injustice, and almost every species of crime.

So terrible are the effects of applying a constant stimulus even to our most natural desires, and placing no restraint on their wanderings, till they

rush into excesses, which we have no longer power to control. By permitting any one of them long to riot in the breast, it becomes at last the master passion of the soul, and makes all the others tributary to its lusts. Then, it is, that we see how truly it was said, that "he that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls." His mind is in ruins—desolate of all that is good; and all that was originally regular and fair is defaced and marred. It resembles the once proud and flourishing Babylon, now fallen in the dust. "Wild beasts of the desert lie there; its houses are full of doleful creatures; and owls dwell there, and satyrs dance there, and the wild beasts of the islands cry in its desolate houses, and dragons in its pleasant palaces."—"Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall!"

SERMON XVII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

1 CORINTHIANS, X. 12.

Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall.

In pursuing our inquiry into the sources of sin in human nature, having considered the appetites, the senses, and the various desires, whether original or artificial, we are next led to the examination of our *affections*, as the instruments of transgression. They are usually divided into *benevolent* and *malevolent*, according as their object is the communication of enjoyment or of suffering to any of our fellow creatures.

To prove that our benevolent affections are naturally innocent and worthy of their divine original, little need be said. Who will require any illustrations of the purity or value of the parental and filial affections; of the affections of kindred, love, friendship, patriotism, gratitude, or pity? Yet pure and celestial as are these sentiments, the general law of our being ex-

tends also to them. They need, as well as our other active principles, to be put under the guidance of reason and conscience, or else they tend to excess, interfere with the exercise of other parts of our nature, degenerate into weakness, and may at last become the parents of crime. To them, more perhaps than to any other parts of our nature, the precept of the Apostle applies; since they are so lovely and innocent in themselves, that our vigilance is less apt to be extended to them.

Of the malevolent affections, resentment, revenge and hatred, I believe the first alone to be native in our breast, and that *that* was implanted originally for useful and even necessary ends. There is a species of resentment, which seems merely instinctive, and which operates in man exactly as in the lower animals. It was plainly intended to guard us against sudden violence on occasions when reason would come too late to our assistance; and it always subsides as soon as we are satisfied that no injury was intended. There is another species of resentment, which is excited only by intentional injury, by apparent wrong and injustice, and which is evidently connected with a sense of virtue and vice, of moral good and evil. The indignation raised by the sight of cruelty and injustice, whether exercised towards ourselves or others, and the desire of having it punished, has nothing of the nature of malice. It is not only an innocent, but a generous movement of the mind. It is resentment against

vice and wickedness. It is one of the common bonds by which society is held together; a feeling which each individual has in behalf of the whole species, as well as himself. The end for which it is implanted in our nature is to protect us from, and to remedy, injustice and cruelty; nor could we be without it, without a loss to the perfection of that nature.

This principle, however, as well as every other in our nature, is susceptible of abuse, of deep and dreadful abuse. In some persons, the instinct of resentment, by being habitually cherished and indulged, becomes a passion which differs from insanity only in its duration. Others, in exercising a deliberate resentment, either direct it against imagined or exaggerated injuries, or suffer it to swell immoderately against such as are real, or cherish it when unavailing, or are led by it to inflict pain, not for the purposes of reparation, but for the mere sake of producing misery. In this way, resentment degenerates into the dreadful passions of revenge, malice, and unforgiving hatred; and the image of God is changed into a resemblance of the character of a demon. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall."

In the view which I have thus given of the various malignant passions, representing them as arising, not from our nature as it was formed by God, but from our own abuse of it, I am warranted by many proofs both from scripture and reason, which

the time does not permit me to exhibit. When we see our Saviour place a little child in the midst of his disciples, and tell them, that unless they resemble it they cannot hope for heaven; when we recall his never to be forgotten words, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom;" when we hear the Apostle Paul commanding his converts to have no malice, no more malice than a child; we are tempted to wonder by what strange perversity any christian should have ever been led to imagine that the breast of a child originally encloses a single guilty passion. With the sacred authority of Jesus our Lord, and of his faithful servant Paul, I need not fear to say that there is *naturally* no such thing in the human heart as ill-will towards our fellow men. There is no such thing as a love of injustice, oppression, treachery, ingratitude, cruelty or revenge for their own sakes. We have, indeed, desires after various external goods. We cherish them; we permit them to gain strength; till at length they become so powerful that we disregard the criminality of the means by which they are attained. But these bad *means* are never the original objects of our desire; and we all have an original repugnancy, and not a propensity to use them. It is a very old observation, and true as it is old, that every man, however abandoned, would prefer to obtain the objects of his desire by innocent means, if they were as easy and effectual as those which

he employs. What more, indeed, is necessary to settle the question as to what feelings are congenial to our nature, than to consider that the temper of envy, rage, hatred and malice, is in itself pure misery. While on the other hand, the temper of compassion, forgiveness, and kindness, is in itself delightful, shedding calmness and peace over the soul, and thus proclaiming that it is designed by our Maker as the natural inmate of the human heart.

There are other active principles of our constitution, innocent and useful in themselves, but capable of becoming the sources of sin. I must content myself with very briefly recalling some of them to your recollection. There is a remarkable propensity of our nature, which has hardly gained a name among moralists, but which yet is very powerful in its operations. It has been sometimes denominated a *love of excitement.* There is something pleasing, we find, in the bare exercise of all our affections, excepting always and only the malevolent ones. We have a satisfaction in being roused to the exertion of any of our faculties. We take a delight simply in being moved. When we have neither hope nor fear, nor desire, nor project, nor employment of body or mind, instead of being happy, we are the most miserable of men. We are tempted to envy the sailor wrestling with the storm, or the soldier mounting the breach. This love of excitement is the origin of that exu-

berant animation which we call love of mischief in children, and which, however inconvenient, nobody thinks of referring to settled perversity. It is this pleasure in the exercise of our faculties also, which accounts for that singular fondness for scenes of danger, which some men seem to feel, and which indeed is felt by us all in a degree, when the danger is not excessive. It accounts too for the pleasure which we take in fictitious distress, and is the solution of the delight which we feel, when our tears are flowing for imaginary sorrows. This part of our nature has its uses as a spring of activity and exertion; and it has its dangers also. There is need of a similar caution in applying stimulus to the mind and heart, as to the body. Excess in either case will produce an unnatural excitement, and lead often to extravagance, folly and sin.

There is an antagonist principle to the love of excitement, which is found in *the love of ease.* The abuse of this propensity is the source of all the sins and miseries occasioned by indolence and sloth; and these are so great, that we might be tempted to think that our nature would have been more perfect without this tendency. But we ought to consider, that if we found no pleasure in repose, we should wear out and exhaust our systems by perpetual and excessive toil. And who can predict the increase of the crimes and woes of man, if all were urged on by a constant impulse to exertion; if there were nothing grateful in the quiet

of contemplation, and the calm of inaction; and all the passions and all the faculties of the human mind were trained up to constant and immitigable activity.

There are sources of sin, also, to be found in the exercise of all our *intellectual faculties.* We may abuse the noble powers of imagination, memory, and reason itself. The regulation of our thoughts is one of the first and highest tasks of virtue, and the neglect of it is the primary source of all transgression. The law of association, by which we explain the phenomena of habit, may, as it is watched over, or neglected, establish the foundation of our virtues, or rivet the chains of our vices.

In short, my brethren, there is nothing in our nature, animal or intellectual, however useful and indispensable, however fitted and designed originally for good, but what by our neglect and abuse of it, may be converted into evil. There is a necessity imposed on us for perpetual vigilance. Whether we eat or drink, whether we think or feel, or desire, whether we are in motion or at rest, whether engaged in exertion or contemplation, it is necessary that reason and conscience should not sleep, that watchfulness and prayer should not cease; and when we think that we stand most safely, let us most carefully take heed lest we fall.

This very hasty and imperfect survey of some of those principal facts and laws in our moral con-

stitution from which the sources of sin arise, may lead us to some general conclusions.

It would have appeared clearly, if I had been able to do justice to so extensive and difficult a subject, that there is no active principle of our nature, which is originally bad or vicious in itself; not one, which we could lose without losing with it a capacity for virtue, as well as a source of sin; not one which is not implanted for a beneficent end; not one, which if its true end is regarded, will not lead us primarily and directly to what is right, and only secondarily, and by its excess or abuse, to what is wrong. Our propensities are all originally directed towards good ends, and it is our own fault if we seek those ends by criminal means.

On the other hand, it is equally clear, that in some of the parts of our nature there is a tendency, and in all a liability, to alteration and change, to infirmity and decay, to extravagance and excess. There is not one faculty we possess, that is not capable of being converted to an instrument of sin; not one, over which it is not necessary for us to place a constant guard.

Our moral nature may be compared to a machine composed of many parts, not one of which is not useful, not one indeed, which is not indispensable. Still it is evident, that however useful every part of such a machine may originally be, if any one is suffered to be out of order, is either too feeble or too powerful in its action, or is in any way, or in any degree deranged, the whole system

must be in that same degree disturbed. In order that the operation of this machine should be perfect, it is necessary that all the parts should be kept in order, each occupying its proper place, each with its due proportion of power; and that the mutual relation, the perfect balance, the harmonious adjustment of all its parts, should be always preserved.

This comparison would, I think, approach in some respects to a description of human nature in its actual state, if we should suppose this machine to resemble a clock, which however excellent in all its parts, is continually tending to run down, requires a stated superintendence and watchfulness, and if long neglected will infallibly be deranged.

It is implied in this view of human nature, that its perfection would consist, not in extirpating or changing a single faculty, desire, affection, passion, or original tendency of our constitution, but in directing them to their proper objects, in restraining them within their proper limits, preserving their due balance, and keeping them all in proper subordination to the supreme authority of conscience.

It is implied also in what has been said, that to do all this is an *effort*, a great, a perpetual effort, in which we need all the strength that God has given us, and the gracious aids of his Holy Spirit. To say, however, of our nature in this way, that virtue is to us an effort, and vice a propensity, is saying no more, after all, than that there is an analogy in all the works of God. What good of any kind is

there in this world, which does not cost us toil, or which may not be corrupted or forfeited by neglect or abuse? Will the fields yield their fruit, if they are not tilled with unceasing care? Or will not thorns and thistles spring up, if they are left without cultivation, and spring up the faster and ranker, the richer and better the soil? Why then should we expect that it should be otherwise with the goods of the mind? Why should we suppose that we should be made virtuous by a miracle, any more than that we should be made wise by one? Or why should we expect that for the soul, which we acknowledge it would be madness to expect for the body? No; it is decreed that all which we enjoy and possess in life should be an acquisition, and not an inheritance. If you ask why this is not otherwise? I answer, you will know, when you are admitted to penetrate the counsels of omniscient and inscrutable wisdom.

The observations which have been hazarded on the moral nature of man, are intended, I hope, for a far more serious purpose than the gratification of curiosity. I think them of great practical moment as they respect our views of the character of God, and as they tend to point out to us the true grounds of christian humility and repentance.

There is no mere opinion ever seriously entertained by a sensible man, which seems to me so unscriptural, so revolting, so dangerous if pursued to its practical consequences, as that which makes

the Deity the author of sin. I know that there have been good men, who have reconciled their minds to it. There is nothing to which a man, who is thoroughly a metaphysician, may not reconcile himself. While, too, the sentiment is wrapt up in mysterious talk about the decrees of God, and encompassed with subtle but slender distinctions between moral and physical necessity, it may be saved from being very mischievous by being very unintelligible. But as a principle to be understood and disseminated among people in the ordinary state of their minds, I can imagine nothing more effectual to prostrate all just ideas of the divine character, and destroy all motives to virtuous effort. I have deemed it important, therefore, to show as distinctly as I could, by an examination of all the leading facts and laws of our moral constitution, that our nature, as it comes from the hand of God, is worthy of its Maker, and that we alone are responsible for our sins. If we believe our nature to be bad in itself, let us explain it how we will, it is impossible not to feel that He who made it so is answerable for its defects. "But we ought to be cautious," says the admirable Bishop Butler, "we ought to be cautious how we charge God foolishly. We ought to take care how we ascribe that to Him, or to the nature he has given us, which is owing wholly to our own abuse of that nature. Men may speak of the degeneracy and corruption of the world, according to the experi-

ence they have had of it. But human nature, considered as the divine workmanship, should, methinks, be treated as sacred; for in the image of God made he man."

The views which have been offered appear important, not only as it respects our ideas of the divine character, but as it regards the practice of true repentance. When I am called on to repent of my sinful nature; to repent of being born a sinner; to repent of not having a better nature than it has pleased God to give me; this language is, I confess, wholly unintelligible to me. The thing is utterly impossible. I may be sorry, indeed, that my Maker was not more kind to me; I may lament the original vileness of my heart, as I may lament an unfortunate tincture of my skin, or any natural deformity of my body. But to be sorry for any defect of my nature as if it were my fault, this is a sentiment which it is impossible that any rational being should ever feel. I have reason to think that many persons have suffered the most exquisite anguish from finding their inability to repent of guilt, which as it was not their own, it was out of their power to avoid. But no. It is my own sins alone which can fill me with remorse; it is my actual negligences and violations of duty which cover me with shame; it is my personal faults for which alone I am responsible. For these, the tears of contrition ought to flow. Would to God that they might flow with that godly sorrow which leads to repentance not to be repented of!

These are the views of the real nature and sources of sin in the human constitution, which I have formed from the best study I could give of the scriptures, and from the best observation I have been able to make of the actual state of man. They are consistent,—indeed I am persuaded they are the only views which are truly consistent with the deepest and most affecting views of our unworthiness and guilt in the sight of God. When we believe that every single faculty of our nature is capable of perversion and abuse, and are conscious that in many respects we actually pervert and abuse them daily, and in all come short of the glory of God; surely we have here a ground for the profoundest, sincerest, humblest penitence, which the heart can ever feel.

There are two impressions which I could wish that these discourses should leave on your minds. The first I give you in the words of St. James; "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God;' for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

The second impression, which I could wish should be left with you, is expressed by St. Paul. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall." From the liabilities to sin which we discern in every part of our nature, we are taught our dangers and our duties. We must feel how

much we need to watch and to pray that we enter not into temptation. We must be always vigilant, always on the alert. They who navigate in a vessel liable to a thousand accidents, a sea in which there are shoals and currents innumerable, if they would keep their course or reach their port in safety, must watch over every part of their ship, carefully repair the smallest damages, and often throw out their line and take their observations. So it should be with the christian in the dangerous voyage of life. He must never relax his watchfulness, however fair may seem the skies, and prosperous the gales; and in the storms of temptation, the anchor of his soul must be the hope of the gospel of Christ, sure and steadfast.

SERMON XVIII.

ORIGINAL SIN.

ECCLESIASTES, VII. 29.

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

THERE are two important sentiments contained in this passage of scripture. The first is, that man, as he proceeds from the hand of his Maker, is what he ought to be. He is formed with all the capacities and endowments, animal, moral, and intellectual, which fit him for the circumstances in which he is placed. He is not indeed, an angel, and of course has not the powers of an angel. But he has all that such a being as a man should possess, in order to do the duties of a man. He is placed for wise, but inscrutable purposes, in a scene of trial, discipline, probation. It is intended that he should form and exercise a character in this world, which will fit him for a higher sphere. In order to this, it is necessary that he should be both

liable to sin, and capable of virtue; and be furnished at the same time with motives to the one, and surrounded with temptations to the other. When therefore it is said that God makes man upright, or more literally and properly, makes him *right*, it is not meant that he makes him originally perfect in wisdom or virtue; but simply that he makes him right or perfect *as a man;* he adapts his nature to his condition; he makes him exactly as a being placed in a state of trial ought to be made. He is formed liable to sin, because otherwise there could be no exercise or trial of virtue. He is made also capable of good; for otherwise, to command him to be virtuous would only be the most cruel mockery.

The second great sentiment of the text is, that as our Creator has formed us right, it is our own neglect or abuse of the nature He has given us, which is the cause of our sins. For that long and dark tissue of crimes, which the melancholy page of history records against our species, in ages that are past; for all those enormities, which we now shudder to behold acted before us on the theatre of the world; for those many frailties and sins with which our own hearts daily reproach us; we have no one to accuse but ourselves. The throne of God is spotless, though we were covered with pollution. We ought to carry this sentiment with us into all our speculations on the state and prospects of human nature. Whatever else may be false,

we are sure that this is true, that the Judge of all the earth must do right. It is better to presume any degree of error in the opinions of any description of men, than by supposing the original constitution of our nature sinful and corrupt, to make the Author of that nature responsible for human guilt. Let us believe any thing sooner than this. "Yea," saith the Apostle, "let God be just, and every man a liar."

I have recently endeavoured to show, by an examination of the general facts and laws of our constitution, that the actual state of human nature corresponds to this representation. Every thing about us, as it proceeds from the hand of God, is good; and it is our neglect and our abuse of it alone, which makes it bad. Our appetites are good. To satisfy our hunger or slake our thirst, is innocent and useful. This is the end for which our appetites are given; and for this alone, the Author of our nature is responsible. But if, passing the limits of the real wants of nature, we become gluttonous or intemperate, we know, we feel, that this is our fault alone. Our desires too are good. The ends for which they are implanted by Heaven are all good. To desire knowledge, esteem, power, superiority, society, or personal well-being, is innocent and useful. But if we cherish and foment our desires till they become passions; if we seek the good ends to which they prompt us, by unjust and unholy means, and in this way become vain,

proud, arrogant, envious, treacherous, unjust, and selfish—for this neglect and abuse of our nature, we alone are answerable. In the same way it may be shown, that every part of our original constitution is useful and indispensable, and that it is fitted and designed by our Maker for good; and that consequently for all the perversions of the good purposes for which our capacities or affections were given us, we, we only are to answer. Man is the author of his own sins, the cause of his own woes, the architect of his own ruin. O sinner, thou destroyest thyself.

In the partial view already taken of this subject, the time did not permit an exhibition of scripture testimonies. I wish to supply this defect in the present discourse. In doing this, I shall simply examine those passages, which some have thought to speak a different language. If these should seem not to justify the conclusions which have been drawn from them, the question, I suppose all will admit, is decided.

The Mosaic account of the *Fall* of our first parents, claims our first and chief attention. We all believe that "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created He him." The question is, whether, from any cause, God has been less beneficent to our nature than to that of our primitive father; and now creates that in sin, which he originally formed in innocency.

In the first chapter of Genesis, the design of the

sublime historian is evidently to teach to all ages, in opposition to every system of atheism or idolatry, this grand truth; that the world was created by one God, by one infinite Mind. Those, who besides this, seek for a system of philosophy and geology in the Mosaic narrative, are at liberty to find it; but it is more, I think, than is professed to be given, more than seems necessary for revelation to impart, and more, therefore, than the sacred history ought to be made responsible for. That there is but one Creator of all things, is surely an idea magnificent enough to fill our loftiest conceptions.

In the same way, I conceive, it is the chief design of the account of the Fall, to teach us why it is, that toil, and suffering, and death are the lot of man. After being told that there is one common Parent of all, who, when he had beheld every thing which he had made, saw that it was very good, the question would naturally arise in the mind of every one, "Why then is not the life of man happier? Why too is it not rendered immortal on the earth, or translated without death to the skies?" These questions are answered, and most wisely and truly answered, in the account which is given us of the Fall of our first parents. We there see that the state of man was originally a state of unmingled happiness and exemption from death. The fairest possible experiment was made,—not indeed, to satisfy the omniscient Creator, but to justify his ways

to our minds. The man was placed in bowers of perfect bliss. The earth, unsolicited, brought forth her fairest and richest products, asking of him only to direct and prune her luxuriant abundance. Every gale wafted fragrance to him, every flower shed for him "odorous sweets," every tree bent with balmy and ambrosial fruits, inspiring him with health and joy. All was peace and universal love; and, if the nature of man could have been trusted with perfect happiness and immortal life on earth, they were now within his reach. But it was soon seen that this was too much for a being so limited and imperfect. Man, being in honour, did not abide. He could not bear unmingled ease and prosperity. His desires passed the bounds of moderation. He fell from his innocence. He violated the divine command.

There, then, it was for ever demonstrated, that such a being as man, at his best estate on earth, is not capable of enduring unalloyed prosperity. He will infallibly abuse it. He needs adversity, "the tamer of the human breast," the "stern and rugged" but faithful nurse of virtue. He needs toil and pain and sorrow. Nay, all this is not enough to restrain the torrent of human passion. He needs DEATH—that mysterious and terrible corrective of sin. He needs to know that his career on earth is bounded; that his days have their limit and their number; that the desires of the wicked shall all finally perish.

This is the lesson which is taught us by the fall of our first parents. We here see, why the infinite Beneficence of heaven has ordained our present state. We see why disease and suffering are sent on us; why we are condemned to eat of the ground in sorrow; why it brings forth thorns and thistles to us; why we are doomed to eat bread by the sweat of our face, till we return to the earth, and that inevitable sentence receives its execution, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Adam was a perfectly fair representative of our species. He was placed in the most favourable circumstances possible. If prosperity corrupted him, if he fell, what son of his can think that he should have succeeded better? Let him, who never knew sin, let him, who feels no frailty within his breast, demand back of his Maker the Paradise that Adam lost.

You will observe that it is uniformly taken for granted in this account, that our primitive sire was exactly such a being as his children now are. He was no more than the most perfect specimen possible of a man. He was a creature of flesh and blood, as we are; of powers, capacities, affections, like our own; and with that same inherent liability to sin, of which we are conscious. Not one word is uttered in the sacred narrative of his possessing an "original righteousness," which belongs not to our common nature. This is purely a fiction of systematic theology. It is clear that his nature was

open to temptation as ours is; else why did he fall? he must like us, have had a law in his members warring against the law of his mind; and he was actually led captive by it. Not one word is uttered, in the original sentence on Adam, of any depravation of our constitution in consequence of his offence. No malediction was poured on the nature of his hapless children by our most merciful and equitable Creator. Labour, suffering, and death were indeed allotted to him, and with him to all his sons. But we find nothing more than this. Not one word of that most terrific sentiment, that the frailty of one man is punished by perpetually and totally corrupting the souls of all his innocent descendants, and while thus born incapable of good, dooming them to eternal and remediless woe.

So far from this, the mercy of our God beams forth in all its brightness, even when he denounces the penalty of his violated law. Never does he appear more truly to be the tender and compassionate Father of our race. He inflicts indeed, upon man, the necessity of perpetual labour; but labour, though thus the child of sin, he means should be the mother of virtue and of happiness. Suffering too is denounced. But it is still designed as the minister of good to man. It is meant to soften the rigour of his heart, to melt it to penitence, and bring him back to God. And even the sentence of death, full of terrors, as it must always be, was mitigated to the first pair, at the moment

it was uttered, by the promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. And blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we now know that even then a ransom was providing from its power, and that a glorious plan of redemption was formed, which was to lead captivity captive, to reconcile the world to God, and unfold life and immortality to all the faithful followers of Jesus.

In this view of the apostasy of our first parents—which is not essentially affected, whether you regard it as a literal narrative, an oriental allegory, or a philosophical fable—the consequences of the Fall on their posterity are represented to be toil, pain, and death. I beg you now to read over the sacred history, and convince yourselves, that not a hint, not a word is to be found, which implies that the nature of man was cursed for the sin of Adam, and his heart tainted and blackened to the very core. If we were not accustomed to such an idea in infancy, I am persuaded that every feeling of our souls would revolt from it, and that we should wonder that every christian does not regard it as a libel on the infinite benignity of our just and merciful Creator.

If then we find nothing in the sentence passed upon Adam, which declares that his posterity should bring with them into the world a guilty nature, we may be satisfied that such an idea cannot be really found in any other passage of scripture.

For the original sentence would certainly contain the whole of his punishment. There are three or four passages, however, from which a contrary idea has been inferred, which I will just point out to your notice.

In the fifth chapter of Genesis it is said, that Seth was born "in the likeness of Adam, after his image," and from this it is inferred that the likeness of God, in which Adam was created, had been lost. But how obvious is it to remark, that if Seth was like to Adam, and Adam like to God, then Seth must also be like to God. And if there could be any doubt, it would be put to rest by a passage in the ninth chapter of the same book, where the reason given why murder is to be punished by death is, *that in the image of God made he man.* And again in James iii. 9, where it is said of all men, they *are made after the similitude of God.*

We find in the sixth chapter of Genesis a strong description of the sinfulness of our race, which preceded the deluge. It was indeed dreadful. But as it is expressly ascribed to man's voluntary abuse of his nature, it can lend no aid to the idea of its original guilt. "All flesh" it is said, "had *corrupted his way* upon the earth." A similar remark may be extended to a parallel passage in the fourteenth psalm.

Nothing further is found to support this idea in all the writings of Moses, and all the historical books of the Old Testament.

In the fifteenth chapter of Job, fourteenth and sixteenth verses, it is said, "What is man that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous." "How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water." This passage I have already considered in a former discourse. It is from the mouth, you will remember, of one of those friends of Job, who were reproved by the Almighty for their ignorance and presumption.

The next passage that is quoted, is from the fifty first Psalm, in which David in the agony of his remorse and contrition, exclaims; "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This language, at the thought of his atrocious crimes, we should say would be in our own tongue nothing more than a natural hyperbole. How plainly does it seem so, when we consider the latitude of oriental poetry.

In all the recorded teachings of our Lord himself, it is not pretended by any one, that there is any declaration of the native corruption of the human heart. He addresses mankind as sinners, as we all know ourselves to be, and calls them to repentance and conversion. But he never intimates that they brought their sin with them into the world, that they were born the objects of the wrath and curse of their Creator, or addresses them as naturally incapable of doing any thing which God has made it their duty to perform.

I might be excused from any farther examination of the few detached passages, which are sometimes quoted for this opinion; since it is monstrous to suppose that any essential doctrine of the religion of Christ is wholly omitted, and even contradicted, in his own teachings. There is one passage, however, to which I would just allude. In the fifth chapter of Romans the Apostle draws a contrast between the blessings introduced by Christ, and the evils which were the consequence of the fall. The phraseology which he uses in one or two verses sounds somewhat strong to a merely English ear, though the idea is very obviously consistent with the general doctrine of the scriptures. "By one man," says the Apostle, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men;" why? because *he* had sinned? No, but because "*all* have sinned." Death is inflicted on them, for the same reason that it was inflicted on him. But as Adam was a specimen, a representative, of his species, the death which passes on all is represented in the subsequent verses, by way of brevity, as the penalty of his offence; and that they are treated as sinners, is spoken of as the consequence of his sin. No one, however, who attends to the general scope and spirit of the passage will be in danger of misunderstanding the Apostle; particularly if we remember what the original sentence passed on Adam was, and consider, that St. Paul cannot mean to teach any thing contrary to what is there taught.

But I know not but that I have already dwelt longer on this subject, than was necessary for your conviction. It has been my wish to clear the sacred volume, on which I truly think the best hopes of the human race depend, from the reproach of ascribing the sinfulness of man to the Author of his being. It is this desire alone of vindicating christianity from what to many minds would be a fatal objection to it, that has led me to these observations. For among truly practical christians I never found any essential diversity on this subject to exist. All agree that we are sinners, whose hope must be in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. All agree that we are liable to sin in every part of our nature, unless we watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. All agree—whether consistently or not is of little importance—that our original depravity must be understood in such a sense as is consistent with our powers to do our duty, and with ascribing the blame of it wholly to ourselves; consistent too, with those passages of scripture which declare that sin is a transgression of a law; that the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers, but every man for his own sin; that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son; that every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God. This is surely enough for all practical purposes. It is enough to place repentance, humility, and the ne-

cessity of conversion from sin, on the proper ground.

Let it then be the influence of this discourse, to increase our dread and detestation of sin. The view we have taken, so far from lessening, should heighten our sense of it, since we see that it is entirely a personal thing; that we do not inherit guilt from our progenitors, and that we have no one to accuse for it but ourselves. Let us gather motives, by God's grace, to resist the power of sin, by thinking of its opposition to the character of God; to his benevolent purposes; to our own true happiness; to the harmony and happiness of the universe. Let us remember that it was to destroy sin that Christ came into the world; that it was for this he toiled and wept, and bled and died; that the voice both of nature and revelation proclaims that sin is that accursed thing which God's soul hateth. "O that my people had hearkened unto me. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil way, for why will ye die, saith the Lord."

Let us then be persuaded by the mercies and by the terrors of the Lord, by the certainty of death, by the solemnities of judgment, by our regard to the eternal welfare of our souls, to break off from our sins by righteousness, to abjure them entirely and forever, and to seek the Lord while he may be found.

SERMON XIX.

UNITY OF GOD.

MARK, XII. 29, 32, 34.

And Jesus answered him; The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord. And the Scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but he. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

It is my design, on the present occasion, my christian friends, to depart, in some degree, from the rule which I habitually prescribe to myself, in the selection of topics on which to address you from this place; and to give you a brief survey of the question which has for so many ages existed in the christian church, with relation to the Unity of the Divine Nature.

In endeavouring to fulfil the duty of ministers of the Gospel of Christ, those, who bear that office

among you, have usually contented themselves with presenting those views of its great truths which have seemed to us, after the most careful inquiry we could make, to be the real doctrines of that gospel. We have ever believed, that the religion of Jesus stands clear of the controversies in which his disciples have engaged; and that it is possible to have a perfectly just view of its essential principles, without the smallest knowledge of the greater part of those differences, which have so long troubled the repose of Christendom. Entertaining this belief, we have seemed to ourselves to discharge our duty, when, according to the measure of our best ability, we have unfolded, without addition and without diminution, what we have conscientiously thought to be the true principles of the christian system. It is very seldom that we have felt it necessary to allude to the different statements of those principles made by other christians. It was painful to dwell on what could not but be esteemed the mistakes, and sometimes the weaknesses of our fellow-believers. Thinking you to be very little exposed to danger from the influence of their errors, we could take no joy in holding them up to your derision, and still less, in exciting your animosity against those who have, in our judgment, departed from the simplicity that there is in Christ. We have, therefore, been always more solicitous to impress on you what is true, than to discuss what is false; and have thought it more in the spirit of

the religion of peace, to shew you in how much christians agree, than to magnify the importance of those points, in which they unhappily differ. We trust, that it has ever been the wish nearest our hearts to give you a practical impression of the nature, the worth, and the beauty of those great features of the gospel, on which our Lord himself insisted; under the influence of which, the true christian character is to be formed, and on which, therefore, our final hopes of salvation must depend.—The very last object of our ambition would be, to make you skilful controvertists; to indoctrinate you in the miserable technics of the sects; to narrow the magnificence of revelation to the paltry metaphysics of the schools; and to exhibit the solemn and sublime principles of christian faith and hope—so clear to the reason, so correspondent to the moral nature, so affecting to the heart of every fair and honest man—in the cumbrous and distorted dress, which was given them in the darkest ages of the church. Still more anxious have we felt, that you should not catch the *spirit*, any more than the language of controvertists. It is a spirit, deadly to the best virtues of the christian character. Nothing is more deplorable than its constant effects. It blinds the eye; it hardens the heart; it obliterates the distinction between right and wrong; it makes evil good, and good evil; it leads men to think they are doing God service, and honouring the cause of their Saviour,

when they are trampling on his most sacred laws—the laws of charity and truth. In every age of the church, it has sought to rend asunder the "seamless robe of Christ," and cover it with the blood of contending sectarians.

The correctness of the maxims by which we have sought to preach the gospel, we are contented should be tried by the manner in which we have treated the controversy with respect to the unity of the divine nature. Without assailing at all the belief of others, we have simply and uniformly presented those views only which seemed to us just. We have spoken of the Lord our God, always and only, as One Lord, and declared that there is none other but he. In our preaching, and in our prayers, we call you to witness, we have led you to him, as the great and single object of religious worship; and have invited you to ask, *through* Jesus Christ, for all things, of *his* Father and our Father; of his God and our God. Very sensible that those may love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, who have very different, and in some respects very erroneous ideas of his nature, we have not sought to diminish your respect for our Trinitarian brethren; but have been willing to trust to the progress of free inquiry into the meaning of the sacred scriptures, to rectify what we think to be their mistaken ideas.

On the most deliberate review of the maxims on which our preaching has proceeded, I feel sa-

tisfied that they are just and evangelical; and I had hoped to have been able to conform my practice to them, as long as my life should be spared, and I should be permitted to continue my honourable labours as a servant of Christ.

> "But we have fall'n on evil days,
> "On evil days have fall'n, and evil tongues."

Our forbearance is made a crime; and our unwillingness to denounce those who differ from us, and to turn our churches into halls of unhallowed and unchristian disputation, is imputed to the most unworthy motives.

To you, my friends, it is unnecessary to offer a word of comment on this subject; or to assure you that we shall not be deterred from performing our duty, in the manner in which, before God, we think we ought to do it, by the misguided zeal of those who know not "what spirit they are of." Still, however, as the question with regard to the divine unity excites a strong interest among many excellent christians, and as its real nature is, after all, but little understood, I have thought it might be useful for once, to give you a general view of the *state of this question*, and *its connexion with other doctrines*. I do not know any better mode of leading you to a right judgment in this controversy, than by simply telling you *what it is;* and how far any vital principle of the gospel is involved in the decision of it.

The testimony of the sacred scriptures is so full, so clear, and so express as to the truth that God is *one*, that all christians, of all denominations, admit it as a primary and undeniable principle. It is so solemnly declared to us, both in the Old Testament and the New, That the Lord our God is *one* Lord, that there is none other but he, and that we shall have no other before him; that all christians must agree, that unless their opinions are consistent with this first and great truth, they must be unscriptural and false. Our Trinitarian brethren, however, suppose that God is not one in the common meaning of this word, but only in a mysterious sense; that there exists in the divine nature a threefold division; and, consequently, they must believe that Moses, in the Old Testament, and our Saviour in the text, would have spoken more definitely and exactly if they had said, The Lord our God is one God *in three persons*—the holy *one* of Israel is in effect the holy *three*—there are none other but *they*. With regard to the meaning of the word *person* in this proposition, there is a very great diversity among our brethren; and, indeed, for the most part, they seem to agree in nothing with respect to it, but in condemning those who decline to use it. You will judge what this word must practically mean, however, when you consider, that they all suppose that each of these persons has a distinct name, a distinct office—is a distinct object of petition, and a distinct object of worship; that the

Father is the supreme and self-existent God, the Son is the supreme and self-existent God, and the Holy Ghost is the supreme and self-existent God. Still, however, though nothing seems wanting here to complete the idea of three distinct beings, our brethren most earnestly, and I doubt not, most sincerely disclaim the idea of three Gods; and heaven forbid, my friends, that we should impute to them any belief which they disavow. I would only say, that my own mind is unable to make the distinction between a person and a being. I can conceive of *one* God; or I can conceive of *three* Gods; but of an existence which is neither one nor three, in any known meaning of these terms, and yet is affirmed to be both one and three, I cannot form the most remote conception. The moment that I affix any idea whatever to these words, they form in my mind the most express and formal contradiction. Other men's understandings may be differently constructed; but for myself, unless the proposition of the Trinity means that there are three Gods, it does not convey to me the smallest gleam of meaning. One cannot with so much propriety be said to disbelieve such a proposition, as to be wholly ignorant of its meaning. It is not rejected because it is a *mystery*, but because, if it be not a contradiction in terms, it is *nothing*—nothing but words without any ideas. Our brethren, however, do not view the subject in this light, and, as far as this is so, they deserve praise for fol-

lowing with fidelity their best convictions of what is right. We, my friends, when we do the same, I should hope, would at least be thought not to merit censure.

This, however, is not the whole of that doctrine which is called the doctrine of the Trinity; a word, you remember, not found in the sacred scriptures, and indeed not invented till long after the birth of Christ. Our brethren mean something more by it than I have yet stated to you. Besides the doctrine that the nature of God comprehends three perfectly distinct, supreme, and self-existent persons, they make the enormous addition of supposing, that one of these persons possesses a Human as well as a Divine nature—is at the same time perfect God and perfect man—at one and the same moment, the infinite, eternal, unchangeable Jehovah, and a frail, feeble, and imperfect mortal like ourselves! I fear, my friends, that some of you who have not much attended to this subject, may think that this representation *cannot* be accurate, and that it is impossible any should think they find such a theory as this in the Bible which you habitually read. You may ask, whether it is possible that any one can suppose, that if a doctrine like this were the true doctrine, our Lord would have made the solemn declaration in our text, of the Unity of God, without the slightest qualification of its meaning. When the great object of Judaism had been to secure the

worship of the only living and true God; when such heavy denunciations had been uttered against every appearance of idolatry; would the introduction of *two new* objects of worship, seemingly at least so inconsistent with this great truth, have drawn from our Lord no word of explanation? In the whole course of his preaching would he have given no hint of such a doctrine? When he gives us so many examples of prayer, would they all have been directed to his Father alone? Would all his numerous and express precepts for prayer, too, have led us to the same object alone, and in the same name, or as the disciples merely of his Son? Then, too, if he were really existing on the earth in a *double nature*, would he have never given the slightest intimation of it? would neither he nor his apostles have ever hinted that any one thing was said or done by him, in his nature as Almighty God, and others, in his nature as a mere man? would they have uniformly, through the New Testament, spoken of him as a distinct being and a distinct person from his father, without the least caution or limitation? Would he have declared, that his Father was greater than he? that of himself he could do nothing, that his doctrine was not his own, but his that sent him—that he was ignorant of the day of judgment—that he was the embassador of his Father—that he was his minister—that he obeyed him—was taught by him—was anointed by him—received all his authority, fulness or sufficiency from him? And final-

ly would it be said, that he is to deliver up his kingdom to God even the Father, that he alone may be all in all? Would such representations as these be given in every page of the New Testament, leading, as they evidently do, necessarily to such conclusions, and not one word of caution be given to us, not a syllable of explanation or comment—not a line to guard us from an error, which, it is said, is fatal to our eternal salvation? "Hadst thou," we may say in the language of the venerable Watts, "hadst thou informed me, gracious Father, in any place of thy word, that thy divine doctrine is not to be understood by men, and yet they were required to believe it, I would have subdued all my curiosity to faith. But I cannot find that thou hast any where forbid us to understand it or to make these inquiries—thou hast called the poor, the ignorant, the mean and the foolish things of this world to the knowledge of thyself, and thy Son. But how can such weak creatures ever take in so strange, so difficult, so abstruse a doctrine? in the explanation and defence of which multitudes of men, even men of learning and of piety, have lost themselves in infinite subtilties of disputes and endless mazes of darkness." And can this strange and perplexing notion be so necessary and important a part of Christian doctrine, which, in the Old and New Testament, is represented as so plain and easy, even to the meanest understandings? I should not be surprised, therefore, if, in considering these

things, some of you, who have taken your christianity only from the Bible, should suppose, that the representation I have given of the doctrine of the Trinity must be a mistaken one; and that it is impossible that any should be found who really believe that our Lord's declaration in the text, of the Unity of God, means in fact, that the divine nature comprehends three distinct, supreme, self-existent persons, one of them possessing, at the same time, the nature of a man, and the nature of the eternal God.

But this is the exact doctrine I do assure you; for I should abhor myself, if I could, in the least, exaggerate it. It is this and nothing else—and is it an inexpiable crime not to find this doctrine in the holy scriptures? And do we deny the Lord who bought us, if we are unable to understand and preach it? And have we forfeited our christianity, nay, our integrity as men, because we have not so learned and so preached Christ? Will this accusation be repeated by our brethren, think you, when we all stand together before the judgment seat of Christ? O far, far rather would I appear before my Judge, at that solemn hour, with all the accumulated errors and absurdities which the human mind in its most pitiable weakness has ever engendered, than with the tremendous responsibility of having made such charges as these against my brethren, on light and insufficient grounds.

I have thus endeavoured fairly to represent to

you what this doctrine really is. I do not say that no argument can be alleged in favour of it; for what is there for which ingenious men cannot find arguments? If you wished, for instance, to prove that Solomon is an object of divine worship, you might reason thus;—at the dedication of the temple, it is said, "And all the people worshipped God and the king." Or if you desired to find the divinity of Moses, you might quote the declaration of Jehovah, "I will make thee a God unto Pharaoh." In short, if you will not take the first principles of reason with you to the study of the sacred scriptures, there is no imaginable contradiction so great that you cannot find for it the semblance of support.

If you will search the sacred scriptures with a meek and reverent application of your best powers to understand them, you will find, no doubt, many strong descriptions of a being so dignified as is our Lord in himself, so perfect in his character, so great in his office, so supernatural in his powers, and now exalted so high by God, as our Prince and Saviour; but you will find nothing, I am persuaded, inconsistent with the truth, that the God whom we love and adore, is one God in one person only.

To this examination of the scriptures, I would solemnly exhort all who entertain any anxieties on this subject. But in order that this examination may be made without too much solicitude for the result, I will attempt, very briefly, to show how

little this doctrine is connected with any thing essential to our faith and our hope.

Let it then be observed, in the first place, that this is not a question which involves the divine origin of the christian religion, and cannot, therefore, with propriety, be called a question as to the divinity of our Saviour. Those who believe that God is one, in the most absolute sense, believe as fully as any other christians, that our religion is from Heaven, and that he who revealed it, came from God and went to God. There is no character in which they find him unfolded, in which they do not most cheerfully, reverently, and gratefully acknowledge him; they own him as the interpreter of God's will, as the visible representative of God's glory, as the angel of God's grace; and they take all his words—being, as he himself declares, not his own, but his Father's who sent him—as the words of God himself. A great obstacle to calm and unprejudiced examination of this subject, is produced by an idea that it affects the divinity of our Lord, which, when we consider that the divine origin of our religion, the divine commission of our Saviour, and his possession of divine powers, are left on every theory unquestioned and entire, will appear to have no just foundation. All this, surely, it is possible to believe, in the fairest meaning of the words, without supposing that our Saviour is himself that very God in whose name he tells us he spoke; without believing that he is at

once the sender and the sent; the Mediator between himself and man; without, in short, believing in a proposition, which confounds not only all the propriety, but all the meaning of language; a proposition not simply imperfectly comprehended, but wholly unintelligible; not merely of a difficult meaning, but absolutely with no assignable meaning at all.

In the second place, it should be carefully remarked, that a belief in the perfect unity of the Divine Nature is entirely consistent with the conviction, that all the blessings of christianity flow from God, as their original source. It has been sometimes supposed, that unless we believe the absolute deity of Christ, we must attribute our salvation to a being infinitely inferior to God. But surely, whatever may be the nature or dignity of the agent whom our Maker employs as the instrument of his beneficence, it is not the less to be regarded as flowing solely from him. The author, the plan, the terms, the means, and the efficacy of the means of salvation, are, on every supposition, all and wholly of God; nor is this truth in the slightest degree affected, or even touched by the inquiry, whether or not it is revealed that there are mysterious divisions in the unity of the divine nature.

Thirdly,—There is another misapprehension with regard to the subject, closely connected with that to which I have just alluded. It is, that unless

we believe Christ to be the Supreme God, we cannot regard him as our all-sufficient Saviour. But if, as we all most sacredly believe, God himself is the original author of all the blessings of our redemption, to doubt the sufficiency of him, whom he has sent to diffuse them, what is it, but to doubt the sufficiency of God himself? Does then the efficacy of these blessings depend in the least on the dignity of the instrument employed to impart them? Could not God, if it were his pleasure, of the very stones raise up children to Abraham? Could he not communicate enough of power to any being he has created, to effect any purpose which he sees to be best? And shall it be said that his beloved Son, whom he hath sanctified and sent into the world, and on whom he hath poured his spirit without measure, is still not competent to the work assigned to him, unless we suppose that he shares the throne, and divides the honours of his Father?

Fourthly,——Another circumstance which has prevented men from taking a calm survey of this subject, is its supposed connexion with what is called the doctrine of the Atonement. I have, on other occasions, given you such views of the connexion of the death of our Lord with human salvation, as have seemed to me just and evangelical. I shall only remark, at present, that there is no view of the nature of our Saviour, more eminently inconsistent with every idea of an atonement, than

that of our Trinitarian brethren; for they all must and do believe, that Jesus suffered only in his human nature. It would be too monstrous to suppose that Almighty God himself wept in agony; that he, whose nature is impassible, endured the severest tortures; that the Creator of the universe was the scorn and mockery of his sinful creatures, died by their hands, and left, for three days, the universe without a governor! nature without a God! This is too horrible to be directly maintained by any one. As, therefore, the divine nature could not suffer, it was *man alone*, on this theory, that died for us, and however unwilling to be so conjoined, it is certain, that every Trinitarian precisely agrees with the Socinian whom he so much abhors.

What a lesson is it of the futility of these unholy disputes, to find, that they who seem at the farthest remove from their opponents, after filling the world with the noise of their contention, and bringing accumulated disgrace on the cause of Christ, do yet, after all, practically meet and unite in exactly the same conclusion.

There are many other considerations which crowd on us, to shew how little would be lost to any thing which we ought to value, if this doctrine were entirely and for ever forgotten in the church. It is time, however, to close this subject, and it is with the greatest pleasure I can truly say, that I end the first, and I trust the last, discourse on this deplorable controversy, which you will ever hear

from me. I can hardly describe the pain and reluctance with which I have submitted to a duty which the times seemed to impose.

If I could have doubted before of the wisdom of that system of abstinence from these debates, to which we owe the christian peace and harmony that we enjoy in this place, I could not doubt it after this experiment. I feel more than ever, that this system, which is charged on us as a crime, is the most unequivocal title which we can produce to the approbation of our fellow christians. If there were no other objection to the controversy, than that it unavoidably leads us to speak and to think with so much familiarity and freedom, of the existence, the nature, and the name, of that awful Power that made us; an idea in every form to be consecrated in our minds, and never to be connected but with our holiest thoughts, and most solemn and devout feelings; this alone should teach us to banish it for ever from this place.

The mere technical language of this unsanctified dispute, which one is compelled to use in speaking of it, fills the mind with intolerable disgust, and seems almost to desecrate the temple where it is introduced. I trust that the wealth of worlds would not buy me habitually to employ the time which we pass in this place, in arguing on either side of this controversy, which was born in the eclipse of christianity; which has ministered to nothing but strife and vain jangling; which has so long been the dishonour and opprobrium of the chris-

tian cause, and a greater obstacle to its progress, than all the arguments of all its enemies united.

There is one short rule on this subject, with the suggestion of which I conclude; it is, that whenever we speak of the nature of God, or the person of our Saviour, we should confine ourselves to the language of the sacred scriptures. This I have ever attempted to do, and here, surely, all christians might unite. Here we should avoid all error both of sentiment and language.

May God send us a consummation so devoutly to be wished. Then would all men worship God the Father in spirit and in truth; then would all bow the knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In that day we should ask of him nothing, but whatsoever we should ask the Father, in his name, he would give it us.

May his peace be with you all for ever.

NOTE.—The English edition of this sermon was prefaced by some "Introductory Observations," which stated the reasons of its being published without the knowledge of the author. A manuscript copy of it, it is there said, was sent over to some gentlemen of his acquaintance, who thought it so excellent, and were so frequently applied to for permission to peruse it, that they determined to strike off a few copies, in order to satisfy the interest which it excited. Some general remarks follow, on the American controversy, which it is unnecessary to quote. The observations are dated, Liverpool, 10th October, 1816. In January 1817, the discourse was reprinted in Boston, with the introductory observations from the English edition, and the following preface:

"The following Sermon was preached in this town, in the autumn of eighteen hundred and fifteen, in consequence of the attempt then made to

destroy the influence and to injure the moral and christian character of the ministers of Boston. The Sermon was received with that approbation, to which it was entitled by its forcible illustrations of truth, and by its excellent spirit. Every reader, who recollects the extent of the provocation, must admire the generous and truly christian forbearance, with which it was met by the author; and will acknowledge, that Unitarianism has at least one mark of truth, and that is, the benignant and forgiving temper which it inspires. The discourse was sent to England by one of the hearers, without a thought of its being published. But, for the reasons stated in the "introductory observations," a few copies were printed. This partial publication has induced the friends of the author to issue an edition of it in this country. His absence renders an application for his consent impossible; but if he shall learn, in another hemisphere, that, whilst distant from us, he continues to diffuse the truths and spirit of the gospel, we trust that the sufferings of absence and sickness will be mitigated, and his submission to the providence of God be animated and confirmed."

In the American edition, some important errors of the English one were corrected. A few immaterial alterations from it have been made in the present edition, and generally on the authority of the original manuscript.

SERMON XX.*

INFLUENCE OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER.

PROVERBS, XXXI. 28.

Her children arise up, and call her blessed.

The society which has intrusted to me the office of addressing you on this occasion, proposes to itself an object so evidently important, that it hardly seems to require any thing more to be said in its favour than simply to state what it is. If beneficence is ever a duty, if charity is ever a virtue, if the sentiment of pity is ever graceful and lovely in the human breast, it must be when our exertions are directed to alleviate the sufferings of the indigent widow, and extend protection to the helpless innocence of female youth. Besides the general considerations, however, which recommend this institution, there is a point of view not so immediately obvious, in which its value strikes the mind with peculiar force. It not only aims to save the orphan child from want, but to preserve it from

* Preached before the Salem Female Charitable Society, Aug. 3, 1814.

vice ; not only to save its body from suffering, but its mind from degradation. It offers to an interesting portion of the community the opportunities and means of virtue and improvement, and thereby contributes to raise the character, not only of these children, but of all those to whom their influence may hereafter extend.

As then this society proposes to improve the character of a portion of the female sex, its value may be measured by the degree and importance of that influence which the female sex exerts on society. It has seemed to me therefore that I shall take a subject altogether appropriate to this occasion, by offering some remarks on the *influence of the female character*, on the civilization and manners, the intellectual character, the virtue, the religion, and consequently the happiness of man here and hereafter. The subject is a very extensive one, and I can, therefore, only hope to present you with a few general considerations, which may perhaps lead you to pursue the inquiry more fully for yourselves.

As the subject thus selected is not usually made a distinct topic of discourse from the pulpit, it may be proper to offer one or two preliminary observations. From some remains probably of the extravagant spirit of the age of chivalry, or from some less respectable cause, it has been usual to speak of women, when in the presence of the sex, only in a strain of the most extravagant and unmeaning adulation. I trust it is scarcely necessary to say,

that I deem far too highly of the real dignity of the female character, of the sanctity of this place, and of the cause with which I am entrusted, to be influenced by such a custom. I should feel humbled and degraded, if it were thought possible that I could speak on this subject in any other language, than I should use if my audience were entirely of my own sex.

It may be proper also to observe that when the influence of the female character is spoken of, its general and steady influence is meant, and not that which may be considered as merely accidental and extraordinary. There have been individuals whose character has produced powerful effects in particular countries, by the display of powers which are not the usual attributes of their sex. Such names as those of Semiramis, Boadicea, Elizabeth, and Catharine, are connected no doubt with many great and important events; but they are surrounded with a kind of splendour, which seems to me neither natural nor pleasing. We regard them very much as we do those wandering luminaries, which are but rarely seen in the heavens, and which appear to have deserted their proper and accustomed sphere. There is something of a feeling of dread, mingled with our admiration of their fierce and dazzling lustre. But the true and permanent glory of woman is a star of milder aspect, and more benignant influence. She decorates and cheers a less ambitious and erratic sphere; and without bringing "fear of change

to nations," shines only on the retirements, and gives life to the virtues and joys, of private and domestic life.

The influence of the female character on the civilization and manners of a community, will readily be acknowledged by all who remember what has been the history of the progress of society. Where woman is respected, the circumstance is always found to be an unfailing proof of the existence of the essential arts, habits and feelings of cultivated life. The manner in which the female character operates on the state of society in this respect, it might not be easy fully to explain; but it is in some particulars exceedingly evident. Civilization is marked by a regard to those laws, which give peace and order to social life in general, and by which the whole community is made the guardian of the rights and privileges of each member of it. Manners consist in a voluntary submission to certain particular and conventional regulations of private society, which are tacitly agreed on for its comfort and happiness, as well as its decoration. The influence of woman tends most powerfully to prepare and train men for obedience to both these classes of laws. Where woman is regarded with respect, her favour will be sought by a conformity to what she approves. In her presence, therefore, the expression of the ruder passions will be silenced, the fierceness of pride will be subdued, the arrogance of power will be repressed, and it is for

her to determine what degree of decency and purity shall subsist in all the external intercourse of society. That proud and lordly will, which could not brook the control of law and the restraints of order, thus bows with an unforced submission to the female sway; and this habitual subordination of the heart to her authority, prepares man for the less grateful chains of regulated life.

But it is in the domestic state that the influence of woman is most powerfully felt. There is the seminary of the social affections; and woman presides over it. There is the cradle of the civilization of man. There is the spot, where the first elements are acquired of that gentleness and self-restraint, that tenderness for the rights and feelings of others, which cements mankind together, and teach them to make manners a part of morals. So powerful is the influence of woman in producing this state of society, that her character and condition are the infallible measure and criterion of its progress. Tell me of a nation where woman is degraded to be the slave of man, and called to those toils which nature by the physical constitution of our sex, has evidently appointed for him alone; and, without any other evidence, we may be sure that this people has not yet emerged from the condition of savages. Or if we hear of a people among whom woman leads only a life of sensation, shut up from society, denied all mental cultivation, and all sphere for the exercise and

expansion of the best affections of the heart; we may be confident that such a people cannot have passed, at most, that middle stage between barbarity and refinement, at which the oriental nations have so long stagnated. But when we are told of a society where woman is regarded as the equal and companion of man, and where she is called to the exercise of the sympathies and virtues for which God and nature have formed her, we are at once sure that civilization, and arts, and learning, and refinement must have there established their empire.

I do not mean to ascribe all the blessings of cultivated life to the influence of woman alone; for it is not often that any great moral effect is the product of any single cause. But we may safely say that these blessings depend in so important a degree on her influence, and may be so much heightened or diminished by the improvement or degradation of her character, that every institution which tends to sustain and exalt that character demands the patronage and exertions of man for its support.

The influence of woman on the intellectual character of the community, may not seem so great and obvious as upon its civilization and manners. One reason is, that hitherto such influence has seldom been exerted in the most direct mode of gaining celebrity—the writing of books. In our own age, indeed, this has almost ceased to be the case,

and if we should inquire for those persons whose writings for the last half century have produced the most practical and enduring effects, prejudice itself must confess that the name of more than one illustrious woman would adorn the catalogue.

That the society and influence of woman has often prompted and refined the efforts of genius, may be granted by the most zealous advocate for the superiority of our sex. From the hallowed retreats of the Port Royal issued the immortal writings of Pascal, Nicole and Racine; and the heavenly muse of Cowper had its inspiration nourished almost exclusively in the society of females.

But whatever may be thought of the influence of the sex in these particulars, there is one point of view in which it is undeniably great and important. The mother of your children is necessarily their first instructer. It is her task to watch over and assist their dawning faculties in their first expansion. And can it be of light importance in what manner this task is performed. Will it have no influence on the future mental character of the child, whether the first lights, which enter its understanding, are received from wisdom or folly? Are there no bad mental habits, no lasting biasses, no dangerous associations, no deep-seated prejudices, which can be communicated from the mother, the fondest object of the affection and veneration of the child? In fine, do the opinions of the age take no direction and no colouring from the modes

of thinking, which prevail among one half of the minds that exist on the earth?—Unless you are willing to say either that an incalculably great amount of mental power is utterly wasted and thrown away; or else, with a Turkish arrogance and brutality, to deny that woman shares with you in the possession of a reasoning and immortal mind, you must acknowledge the vast importance of the influence, which the female sex exerts on the intellectual character of the community.

But it is in its moral effects on the mind and heart of man, that the influence of woman is most powerful and important. In the diversity of tastes, habits, inclinations and pursuits of the two sexes, is found a most beneficent provision for controlling the force and extravagance of human passions. The objects which most strongly seize and stimulate the mind of man, rarely act at the same time and with equal power on the mind of woman. While he delights in enterprize and action, and the exercise of the stronger energies of the soul, she is led to engage in calmer pursuits, and seek for gentler enjoyments. While he is summoned into the wide and busy theatre of a contentious world, where the love of power and the love of gain in all their innumerable forms occupy and tyrannize over the soul, she is walking in a more peaceful sphere; and though I say not that these passions are always unfelt by her, yet they lead her to the pursuit of wholly different objects. The current, if

it draws its waters in both from the same source, moves with her not only in a narrower stream, and less impetuous tide, but sets also in a different direction. Hence it is that the influence of the society of woman is almost always to soften the violence of those impulses, which would otherwise act with so constant and fatal an influence on the soul of man. The domestic fireside is the great guardian of society against the excesses of human passions. When man, after his intercourse with the world, where alas! he finds so much to inflame him with a feverous anxiety for wealth and distinction, retires at evening to the bosom of his family, he finds there a repose from his tormenting cares. He finds something to bring him back to human sympathies. The tenderness of his wife and the caresses of his children introduce a new train of softer thoughts and gentler feelings. He is reminded of what constitutes the real felicity of man; and while his heart expands itself to the influence of the simple and intimate delights of the domestic circle, the demons of avarice and ambition, if not exorcised from his breast, at least for a time relax their grasp. How deplorable would be the consequence if all this were reversed; and woman, instead of checking the violence of these passions, were to employ her blandishments and charms to add fuel to their rage! How much wider would become the empire of guilt! What a portentous and intolerable amount would be ad-

ded to the sum of the crimes and miseries of the human race!

But the influence of the female character on the virtue of man, is not seen merely in softening and restraining the violence of human passions. To her is mainly committed the task of pouring into the opening mind of infancy its first impressions of duty, and of stamping on its susceptible heart the first image of its God. Who will not confess the influence of a mother in forming the heart of a child? What man is there, who cannot trace the origin of many of the best maxims of his life to the lips of her, who gave him birth? How wide, how lasting, how sacred is this part of woman's influence! Who that thinks of it, who that ascribes any moral effect to education, who that believes that any good may be produced, or any evil prevented by it, can need any arguments to prove the importance of the character and capacity of her, who gives its earliest bias to the infant mind.

There is yet another mode in which woman may exert a powerful influence on the virtue of a community. It rests with her, in a preeminent degree, to give tone and elevation to the moral character of the age, by deciding the degree of virtue which shall be necessary to afford a passport to her society. The extent of this influence has never perhaps been fully tried; and if the character of our sex is not better, it must be confessed that it is in no trifling degree to be ascribed to the fault

of yours. If all the favour of woman were given only to the good ; if it were known that the charms and attractions of beauty and wisdom and wit were reserved only for the pure ; if, in one word, something of a similar rigour were exerted to exclude the profligate and abandoned of our sex from your society, as is shown to those, who have fallen from virtue in your own—how much would be done to reinforce the motives to moral purity among us, and impress on the minds of all a reverence for the sanctity and obligations of virtue.

The influence of woman on the moral sentiments of society, is intimately connected with her influence on its religious character; for religion and a pure and elevated morality must ever stand in the relation to each other of effect and cause. The heart of woman is formed for the abode of christian truth; and for reasons alike honourable to her character and to that of the gospel. From the nature of christianity, this must be so. The foundation of evangelical religion is laid in a deep and constant sense of the invisible presence, providence and influence of an infinite Spirit, who claims the adoration, reverence, gratitude, and love of his creatures. By man, busied as he is, in the cares, and absorbed in the pursuits of the world, this great truth is alas ! too often, and too easily forgotten or disregarded; while woman, less engrossed by occupation, more "at leisure to be good," led often by her duties to retirement, at a distance

from many temptations, and endued with an imagination more easily excited and raised than man's, is better prepared to admit and cherish and be affected by this solemn and glorious acknowledgment of a God.

Again; the gospel reveals to us a Saviour, invested with little of that brilliant and dazzling glory with which conquest and success would array him in the eyes of proud and aspiring man; but rather as a meek and magnanimous *sufferer*, clothed in all the mild and passive graces, all the sympathy with human woe, all the compassion for human frailty, all the benevolent interest in human welfare, which the heart of woman is formed to love; together with all that solemn and supernatural dignity, which the heart of woman is formed peculiarly to feel and to reverence. To obey the commands, and aspire to imitate the peculiar virtues of such a being, must always be more natural and easy for her than for man.

So, too, it is with that future life which the gospel unveils, where all that is dark and doubtful in this shall be explained; where penitence shall be forgiven, and virtue accepted; where the tear of sorrow shall be dried, the wounded bosom of bereavement be healed, where love and joy shall be unclouded and immortal. To these high and holy visions of faith, I trust that man is not always insensible; but the superior sensibility of woman, as it makes her feel more deeply the emptiness

and wants of human existence here, so it makes her welcome with more deep and ardent emotions the glad tidings of salvation, the thought of communion with God, the hope of the purity, happiness and peace of another and a better world.

In this peculiar susceptibility of religion in the female character, who does not discern a proof of the benignant care of heaven of the best interests of man. How wise is it that she whose instructions and example must have so powerful an influence on the infant mind, should be formed to own and cherish the most sublime and important of truths. The vestal flame of piety lighted up by heaven in the breast of woman, diffuses its light and warmth over the world,—and dark would be the world if it should ever be extinguished and lost.

I have hitherto spoken chiefly of the influence of woman, as it may be beneficially directed. The power to do so much good, however, undoubtedly implies a corresponding power to do evil. The perversion of the female character is even more terrible than its right direction is salutary. The recent history of the world affords us some impressive illustrations of this truth. Among the causes of that tremendous revolution, which has just now reached its termination, the character of female society in France was not the least considerable. I refer to the entire and debasing corruption of manners, the profanation of the mar-

riage vow, the heartless dissipation, the rejection of all honourable occupation and serious affection, which then existed, and which were but thinly concealed by the artificial polish, the ambitious wit, the ostentatious and superficial tinge of literature, which overspread them. Could indeed those foul barbarities, that scene of horror and of blood, which the mind shudders even to remember, have ever existed in a country, where woman had not lost the character of her sex, and man, having learned to despise and reject her influence, had not sunk down again to the ferocity of the savage state? Other causes were no doubt in operation; but I am persuaded that no more powerful cause of these excesses existed, than the degradation and perversion of the female character and influence. Indeed, when woman ceases to be that pure and gentle being which nature intended her to be; when she ceases to overawe profligacy, and to win and shame man into decency, fidelity, and love of unsullied virtue; what else is to be expected, than that the influence so powerful to strengthen and refine and elevate society, should operate entirely to its corruption and debasement; that domestic happiness and private honour should be extinguished, the restraints and checks of public opinion be broken up and annihilated, the last barriers of virtue, religion and humanity thrown down, and a flood of misery and crimes admitted, to overwhelm all that is salutary and fair in the condition of society.

I have thus slightly and inadequately surveyed the influence of the female character. We see that the manners, the intellectual, the moral and the religious character, in one word, the best interests of man, are most intimately connected with the dignity, the purity, the intelligence and virtue of the female mind.

This view of the importance of your sex has been presented to you, my friends, not, I trust you will believe, to feed your self-complacency, but to remind you of your high duties. It is a call upon you to reverence yourselves as the guardians and instructers of mankind. It is a reply to those idle suggestions, which have sometimes been made, that even in christian lands the condition of woman is degraded, by the denial to her of that share of influence, and of those equal rights, for which nature intended her. Compare the condition and pursuits of the mass of men with those of woman, and tell me on which side lies the inferiority. While the greater part of our sex are engaged in turning up the clods of the earth, fashioning the materials which are to supply the physical wants of our race, exchanging the products of the industry of different countries, toiling amidst the perils of war and the tumults of politics, to you is committed the nobler task of moulding the infant mind; it is for you to give their character to succeeding ages; it is yours to control the stormy passions of man, to inspire him with those sentiments which subdue

his ferocity, and make his heart gentle and soft; it is yours to open to him the truest and purest sources of happiness, and prompt him to the love and reverence of virtue and religion. A WIFE—a MOTHER! How sacred, how venerable these names! What nobler object can the most aspiring ambition propose to itself, than to fulfil the duties which these relations imply! Instead of murmuring that your field of influence is so narrow, my friends, should you not rather tremble at the magnitude and sacredness of your responsibility? When you demand of man a higher education than has hitherto been often given you, and claim to drink from the same wells of knowledge as himself, should it not be, that you may be thus enabled, not to rush into that sphere which nature has marked for *him*, but to move more worthily and gracefully within your own.

But I am aware that I am not addressing those by whom these considerations have been overlooked. It is the testimony of a profound and sagacious traveller, who has observed every variety of civilized life, that the females of New England are distinguished above all others for their personal care of their offspring. What exalted praise is this! My heart swells with exultation to believe that my countrywomen merit it. It is a far nobler eulogy than if it were said of you that you were nursed by the graces, encircled with the cestus of the queen of beauty, and that all the muses had

poured their inspiration into your minds. Prize that praise, my friends. It is the richest gem which can adorn you. Seek to add nothing more to it, than that as you are more distinguished for your care, you are also more qualified to bestow it. Let it be said of you, that you prefer the virtues of the female character for your children, before its accomplishments, their minds before their bodies, and above all, that it is your chief care, to pour into their hearts and understandings the pure illuminations of the gospel of Christ, in all its simplicity, loveliness, and power.

But in the interesting little group, which your humanity has brought together, I see a striking proof that you feel your duties as christians. I hail it as a pledge that you have that enlarged benevolence of the gospel which interests you, not only in your own offspring, but in all the children of want and sorrow. You will continue, I doubt not, in the good work of mercy and love which you have begun; and grow even more zealous in it. You will feel towards these little ones the responsibility of parents, and seek to bring them up in those habits of industry, sobriety, prudence, foresight, virtue and religion, which will make them hereafter useful to society. Go on then, my friends, to fulfil your high and honourable vocation. *Your* children, and *these* children of your *pity* too, shall rise up and call you blessed—blessed as the instruments of heaven's bounty, blessed as the

guardians and ministers of human virtue and happiness; blest even in this life—how eternally, how unspeakably blest in another!

I turn now to ask all who have assembled on this occasion, and to ask you with confidence, my friends, to lend your aid to the exertions of these pious and benevolent females. If you acknowledge with me the importance of the character of the female sex to mankind, you will need no other argument to convince you of the value of this charity. It is its noble object to rescue these tender orphans, not merely from suffering, but from neglect and degradation; to make their future influence on society the influence of virtue and innocence and intelligence, instead of the influence of ignorance and perhaps of depravity. Think not lightly of their importance, because their future condition in society will probably be humble. In our country it is absurd to talk of any other distinction of ranks than is given by distinction of character. We are all so necessarily connected together by our political institutions, that each class of society acts and reacts on all the rest; and it is not possible that one part should be degraded and corrupt, without extending its malignant influence to the rest. You are not less interested, therefore, in the character of those whom these little ones are hereafter to influence, than in that of those, whom you regard as your companions in life. As then the peace and happiness of society depend on the vir-

tue and intelligence of its members; and as, if you make woman enlightened and pure, you make man virtuous and good, I might call on your self-love as well as your benevolence, to impart your aid to this institution.

But if all this were otherwise, still I could not endure to hear that these children had a light claim upon you, because born to obscure and humble life. Have they not souls as worthy of cultivation, as immortal as your own? Can you abandon them to misery, perhaps to ruin, because they are not born to the comforts with which you and your children are blessed? Was it their crime to be so early deprived of a parent's tenderness and care; or to find their parents, if spared to them, unable to save them from suffering and want? Are you sure that by no conceivable revolution of this changing life, some whom you so tenderly love, may be reduced to need a similar compassion, with no other claim upon it than these little ones now advance?—"To the poor the gospel is preached." The Son of God disdained not to utter the glad sounds of salvation and hope to souls like these. And shall we find nothing to move us in such an example?

I beseech you, in the name of that affectionate Saviour, who died for us all; of him, who carries the lambs in his arms and folds them in his bosom; of him, who if he were now on earth would say, "Suffer these little children to come unto me, and

forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;"—I beseech you in the name of him who commanded us to be "merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful," now to prove yourselves worthy to be his disciples. Then will the recollection of this evening's bounty come over your memory with a sweet and consolatory influence. These children, and the widowed sufferers who will share your bounty, will rise up, and call you blessed. Their prayers will ascend for you to the throne where mercy dwells; and after a course of piety and benevolence on earth, their voices will join the acclamations of angels, and hail you among the eternally blessed in the happiness of heaven and with the presence of your God.

SERMON XXI.

ON LEAVING THE OLD CHURCH.

PSALM XXVI. 8.

Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.

To any man, with whom devotion is a sentiment of the heart as well as a dictate of the understanding, and who has therefore the idea of pleasure as well as that of duty connected with social worship, these words of the Psalmist will need no explanation. By a well known and universal law of our nature, our attachment to whatever gives us pleasure embraces all its accidental concomitants; and the truly devout worshipper not only takes delight in the act of adoration itself, but extends some degree of his complacency to those who habitually unite with him in it; to the voice which leads his devotions, and even to the place which is wont to be the scene of them. With the idea of the house of worship is associated the recollection of the purposes to which it is devoted, the bless-

ings and consolations of religion, the hope of the favour of God, of communion with Christ, and of the pure and immortal happiness of a better world. Thus, with every mind of religious sensibility, a degree of dignity and even sanctity is imparted to every spot, however humble, which is consecrated to the service of God.

These feelings are not confined to those who are familiar with the deep and solemn pleasures of devotion. *All* who are accustomed habitually to attend public worship, especially if they have done it from early youth, in some degree partake of them. They may indeed sometimes be so faint, that we are hardly aware that they exist at all, till we find them, as we now do, about to be interrupted. I suppose there is not one among us wholly unaffected by the thought, that this house, hallowed by the prayers of our forefathers, and so long the scene of our weekly worship, is about to be resigned to ruin. It is true that the liberal and rational genius of our religion has taught us that God is not worshipped in this place, or in Jerusalem, alone; that it is the spirituality and truth of our services, not the place or the manner of them, which makes them acceptable; and that wherever he records his name, there he will come unto his people and bless them. It is true also that our leaving this house at this time is voluntary; that all of us either originally felt, or else, by a generous surrender of individual judgment to the general opinion, are now led to acquiesce in

the propriety of this measure. Yet still, notwithstanding we all believe and hope that this house is to fall only to give place to one more commodious, and more suited to the dignity of public worship, there are none of us who can think with absolute indifference that we meet within these walls *for the last time.* "There are few things," it has been said, "not purely evil, of which we can say without some emotion of uneasiness, *this is the last.* Those, who never could agree together, shed tears, when mutual discontent has determined them to a final separation; and of a place, which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart." "We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole; the termination of any period of life reminds us, that life itself has its termination; when we have done any thing for the last time, we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted to us is past, and that as more is past, there is less remaining."

This occasion then is fertile of remarks, which though common, and some of them melancholy, are yet of a salutary tendency. I shall endeavour to suggest some of them to your remembrance, without any very scrupulous attention to the order in which they are offered.

1. In taking leave of this ancient edifice, we are naturally led, in the first place, to think of its original founders. Its annals commence in the year

1715; and we find that the spot on which this church now stands, had at that period been so long designed for a place of religious worship, under the name of "*Church Green*," that the tradition was probably lost of the time when it was thus appropriated. As but seventy-nine years had then passed since the first settlement of the town, we may fairly conclude that it was among the earliest acts of the original settlers to mark out this spot for the service of God.

We are led therefore to think of the labours and virtues of those noble and venerable men, before whom the founders of every other nation fade into insignificance; men, over whose minds religion exercised so powerful a sway, that its honour and its interests were ever first in their thoughts; men, who were so far elevated above the ordinary motives of human action, that conscience was ever to them the supreme law; who feared nothing but the displeasure of the Almighty, and who were ready for every sacrifice in the cause of truth and virtue. There is something refreshing in merely thinking of such men. We feel our natures ennobled by being allowed to claim kindred with them. I know that they were not faultless. It is true, that from their dread and detestation of popery, which had been the recent cause of so many wars and persecutions, some of their religious sentiments had contracted a too austere and polemical cast; and it is not surprising that in common with all Eu-

rope, they had not yet learned the refined principles of religious toleration. But when we call up the recollection of them, and exhort you to become better by their example, it is not implied that you are to adopt all or any of their views, without examination. It would be, in truth, to falsify our descent from them, if we should put our minds into the shackles even of their opinions; if under pretence of proving their attainments, we should become indifferent about our own; and should abandon their spirit while we boasted their names. We show the truest reverence to them, when we do with regard to them as they did with regard to their fathers; examine their opinions with respect, but still with freedom and independence; make the best use in our power of the lights and aids, in many respects, no doubt, superiour to theirs, which Providence has put into our hands; draw, like them, all our sentiments from the Scriptures alone, and then be faithful like them to the dictates of conscience, whatever they may be.

2. Another sentiment which is naturally inspired on leaving this house, is that of gratitude for the favours of heaven toward this religious community. Its annals are short and simple. There was nothing of the spirit of schism in the origin of this church; and its progress has never been marked by any controversy with any other. Its history affords a pleasing proof of the success of the great experiment, never fairly made in any

other country, whether man may not be safely trusted with a greater degree of religious liberty than has ever before been granted. The spirit of this church has always been peaceful and liberal. The terms of church communion have never been narrow and exclusive. Our records display a very remarkable degree of unanimity in almost all important measures. Your pastors have been elected without dissension; and no permanent root of bitterness has ever sprung up to trouble you. Is it not then a cause of gratitude, that the religion of Christ, a religion so simple, practicable, reasonable, divine, so full of the most ennobling principles, and hopes so perfectly adapted to the condition and wants of our nature, has for a century of years been here preached in security and peace; that we are permitted to hope, that many hearts have here been gladdened by its tidings of great joy; many consciences roused to reflection by its motives; many passions regulated, lusts subdued, and virtues nourished and sustained by its influence; many sorrows assuaged by its consolations; and many souls fitted by it for a purer world.

My friends, we ought not to forget, that the privilege of hearing such truths as have here been preached, however lightly we may have prized them, and with whatever insufficient ability they may at times have been uttered, is one which was not granted to kings and prophets, to philosophers and sages of other times. In order proper-

ly to estimate it, you must think of the moral condition of those lands over which ignorance broods, and superstition waves her torch of cruelty and terror; where God is not known in any thing of the truth and loveliness of his character; where the altars of idolatry smoke with bloody sacrifices, and a system of senseless and demoralizing rites and ceremonies are the substitutes for piety, virtue and benevolence. You must think even of those *Christian* countries, where the light of the gospel is so imperfectly enjoyed; where its purity and simplicity are marred by so many corruptions; where an ambitious and immoral priesthood find their interest in keeping the human mind in darkness, and conscience in chains. Have we not cause then, my brethren, when we think of these things, to bless God for the religious privileges, which our fathers have here enjoyed, and the rich inheritance of which they have transmitted to their children.

3. While we thus think of the favours of God to this church, and are grateful for our share of them, we are each called to inquire what account we can give of the *use which we have made of them.* Look back, my friends, on the hours passed within these consecrated walls.—You, particularly, whose infancy was here dedicated to God; who here first joined in public adoration of Him; who have here so long heard of his providence and perfections, of Christ and eternity, of holiness and piety, of your duty and expectations. How have your privileges

been improved? Can you hope that the great purpose of all religious institutions has been in any degree answered? Has the gospel had any thing of its proper influence, its regenerating and sanctifying influence, on your hearts and lives? Has it ever waked in you the sentiment of gratitude to God; of disinterested kindness and good-will to man? Has it ever lessened this world in your regard? Has it ever made you feel penitence and abhorrence for sin, taught you to love goodness, and inspired you with desires after a world of purity? And if you can humbly hope that these effects *have* in some good degree been produced, still have you not cause to lament that many of your hours here have not been more profitably spent? Can you not remember many cold and mechanical, many forced and lifeless services? While God has been upon your lips, has not mammon been sometimes in your hearts? Has not your motive for coming here been too often only to comply with habit and usage; to be amused perhaps, and occupied by the discourses here delivered, or to pass your verdict on their merits or defects? Have you not sometimes, instead of appropriating the admonitions of the preacher to yourselves, and seeking to become better under his reproofs, employed yourselves only in considering how closely they apply to the failings of your neighbour; and thus instead of using the instructions of the sanctuary as a means of personal holi-

ness, turned them into nutriment for private malignity? In one word, can you say that the means of grace, which have here been furnished you, have been employed, as they ought to have been, in fortifying you against the temptations of the world, and the seductions of sense and appetite; in enabling you to gather new strength to your good principles; in making you more vigorous in your warfare against sin, and more conscientious in the discharge of your christian duties?

But, my friends, when I speak of the sins which this house has witnessed, I do not mean that they have all been confined to *you!* He who speaks to you could also tell of languor, and want of interest and zeal in his duties; of too low a sense of his responsibility to God; of too much regard to your approbation and favour. Ah, my friends! the recollection of too many broken and polluted and unworthy services must now force itself upon the minds of us all, and ought to send a pang of sincere contrition to our hearts. Let us pray to God to forgive us for every opportunity which we have here neglected. Let us examine ourselves fairly. If we have never been faithful to ourselves before, let us be so now. Let this house witness at least *one* act of conscientious self-inquiry. Let there be at least some moments spent here, which God will approve and bless. Let us not leave this temple without resolving that by the grace of God we will not enter another, without better dispositions for

improvement, and a deeper sense of our accountability for our privileges.

4. The consideration that we shall never again assemble within these walls either for the usual duties of the sabbath, or to celebrate the love of the Saviour at his table, gives to us a lesson of the change and decay to which all things are subject. Our best exertions could have retarded but for a few years the ruin to which this temple is about to be resigned; and which must ere long overspread all terrestrial objects. Time rolls its dark and desolating tide over all the monuments of human art and industry; it spares not even the altars of piety, but sweeps away all things in indiscriminate destruction. It is the fixed and unalterable law of nature that the fashion of this world should pass away, and that man, its temporary sovereign, should pass away with it. Well then! let them pass away. He who made the world, and all the actors therein, knows best what is wise and fit to order concerning them. But it ought to console us, that with the perishable materials of which this inanimate world and our earthly tabernacle are composed, God has not destined our nobler souls to decay and oblivion. He has fitted them for a scene of true and permanent honour, of sublime and pure enjoyment, of never-ending improvement; and has deposited with us the means and the power of securing to ourselves this glorious reversion. While therefore, we contemplate the vicissitudes and

changes of the world, let us learn to value things according to a better standard than that of a life, which has nothing fixed but the unperishable characters of piety and virtue. While we think of the desolation that is about to overtake these walls, let us not forget that in this world we too have no continuing city. And as the language of Providence respecting our ancient edifice is this—"Arise and depart, for this is not your rest;"—so likewise are we admonished by the Almighty in his word,—"Be ye also ready." Let your lamp be trimmed and burning; for ye must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

In taking our parting look of these venerable walls, I cannot wonder that many of you, even though desirous that this event should take place, should still feel some strong emotions of regret for its necessity. Some of you must call to mind that it was here your infancy was devoted to God at the baptismal font, and that here you have continued to worship till time has silvered your heads with the honours of age; that it was here you felt your first and strongest impressions of religious duty; that here you have named the name of Christ, and solemnly expressed your resolutions to depart from iniquity. It is impossible, too, in thinking of the scenes through which you have passed, not to call to mind the fond recollection of many, who once partook with you in your sacred privileges, with whom you were accustomed to take

sweet counsel, and walk to this house of God in company. The places which once knew them, now know them no more. Yet busy imagination again peoples the seats which they were wont to occupy, with their dear and honoured forms. The bereaved husband seems for a moment again to behold the departed wife of his bosom; the widowed wife again to behold her stay and counsellor and friend; the loved image of the sister rises to the affectionate remembrance of the brother, and the sister thinks again of her lost brother's virtues; the child once more looks on his venerated parent and guide, and the parent recals again the sweet smiles of the tender infant, or the maturer graces of the child whom he had hoped was to be the ornament and joy of his declining years.

But, my beloved friends, let not these imaginations be indulged merely to gratify the luxury of grief. Let us think of the virtues of the friends who are gone, not to lament that they are translated to kindred spheres, but that we may be incited to imitate them in our lives, to purify our minds from all inordinate sublunary desires, and to endear a better and purer world to our hearts.

Nor can he who speaks to you remember without some sensibility that he occupies this sacred desk for the last time. He cannot forget that it was here that he was separated to the work of the ministry of Christ; that here the vows of God were imposed on him; that his life was here

devoted to your service for Jesus' sake ; that he has here baptized and instructed your children ; and that he has never here seen a countenance which was not turned on him with most unmerited kindness and indulgence. God forgive the many defects and imperfections of his services, and grant that what in them has been right, may not have been wholly performed in vain.

May God grant his blessing upon you during your partial and temporary separation from each other. May he prosper all your wishes and designs for the honour of his worship. And if it should be too much to expect, in this world of mortality, that you should all be permitted to resume your seats, still may it be granted that we may all be reunited, if not in an earthly temple, yet in those mansions of bliss, that our Saviour has gone before to prepare for the just in heaven.

But it is time that we should bid farewell to these walls, so long the silent witnesses of our worship, now no more to be filled with the sounds of adoration or the hymns of praise. Farewell to this sacred desk, where Checkley, Bowen, Howe and Everett have preached and prayed. I need not add another name to this list, nor say with what affection you regard it.—But does there then, remain nothing more for us to perform within this temple ? Can nothing more be here done which heaven will approve ? Yes, my friends, you are invited to make one more sacrifice on the altar of

charity. You may mark your departure from this house by a deed of beneficence. Let your last be your best and purest service. Let the angel of mercy bear an honourable record of your bounty on high. Remember that the poor are a legacy left you by your Saviour; and that he has told you, that a cup of cold water given to one of his disciples in the true spirit of charity, shall in no wise lose its reward. And how can I better close the instructions, which for so long a period of years have been given from this place, than by repeating the gracious words which his true disciples shall hear again from his lips at the last day; "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; in prison, and ye came unto me. Verily I say unto you; inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

SERMON XXII.*

DEDICATION OF THE NEW CHURCH.

1 PETER, III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope, that is in you, with meekness and fear.

CHRISTIANITY is a religion addressed to the reason of man. Look around you, my friends, on this temple, which we have now assembled to dedicate to the purposes of christian worship, and see how every thing proclaims, that the religion we profess makes its appeal only to our nobler nature. Here is no pomp of a gorgeous and imposing ceremonial. Here no altar smokes with the blood of victims; no incense fills the air with its perfume. No priest is here claiming a mysterious sanctity, as the in-

* The title page of this discourse, as printed by Mr. Thacher, was as follows: "An Apology for rational and evangelical christianity; A Discourse at the Dedication of a new Church on Church Green, Summer Street, Boston. To which are added Notes and Illustrations. By Samuel Cooper Thacher." Mr. Thacher's Preface is now printed at the close of the sermon, immediately preceding the notes.

spired depositary of the will of heaven. No daring hand has here attempted to represent to the senses the awful person of the Being we adore; or even to suggest through them to the imagination the most distant image of his ineffable glory. All here is simple. All is intellectual. All announces, that the God, whom the christian worships, is a spirit, and is to be worshipped only in spirit and in truth. The gospel, we see, disdains to owe its influence to the fears of a superstitious temper, or the enthusiasm of a heated fancy. It requires of us only a reasonable service. It demands no tribute, but the homage of the understanding. It accepts no incense, but the secret sigh of the broken and contrite heart. Our bodies, purified from all guilty passions, are the only victims, it calls us to present on its altars; and it is the fire of divine charity alone, which descends from heaven to consume our spiritual holocaust.

Christianity, then, is a religion addressed solely to the intellectual and moral nature of man. Our text implies this truth, when it directs us never to decline to submit the grounds of our christian hope to the tribunal of enlightened reason. It teaches also, that we are not to be indifferent to the manner in which our fellow men regard our religious sentiments; and this obligation, I conceive, extends not only from christians to unbelievers, but from one christian to another. There exist—it is but too well known—among the different communities

of christians, some peculiar modes of regarding the truths of the gospel; and it is fitting, according to the spirit of our text, that we should be ready to justify these modes of thinking to our fellow-believers. The occasion of entering, for the first time, this sacred edifice, has seemed to me a more appropriate one, than usually occurs, for offering some explanations of what may be thought the peculiarities of those, who worship here, as well as of a large class of christians throughout the world. They have been, I am persuaded, not a little misunderstood; and some observations, though of course very general ones, on the leading features of them, may help to lessen, if not to remove, some unhappy prejudices, and to enlarge the mutual charity of christians. Nothing, however, can be more remote from my intentions, than to assail the conscientious belief of others, except so far as this may seem to be necessarily done by simply vindicating our own. Sorry indeed should I be, if the sounds first heard within these walls should be those of animosity; or should seem to breathe any note, which, however otherwise unworthy, might not accord with those celestial strains, which first announced peace on earth and good will to men.

I. Allow me then to make a preliminary observation; and it is this; that we humbly trust, that we do agree with the great company of the disciples of our Lord in every age, in resting on the same foundation, on which all christian faith is

built. We believe, as they do, in one great Author, Supporter, and Controller of the universe, in his nature infinite, in all his attributes perfect, in all his perfections harmonious, the object, the only object, of the supreme worship, reverence, gratitude, trust, love of all his creatures. We believe, as they do, that this glorious Being has sanctified and sent into the world his beloved Son, to redeem our race from iniquity; to secure to them the hope of pardon; to elevate the human mind by the influence of truth and virtue; and thus to ripen it for higher powers and more exalted blessedness in heaven. We believe, that on him the spirit of the Almighty was poured without measure; that he received all that was necessary to make him our perfect guide, our all-sufficient Saviour, and that to all who repent, believe and obey, he is made of God wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. His words are to us, as the words of God; his commands, as the commands of God. We honour the Son, as we honour the Father, who sent him. The truths, which he taught, we believe to be contained in the holy scriptures; and we take them as the authoritative record of the facts, principles, doctrines, precepts and sanctions of our religion. We receive and freely rest our hopes of salvation on what they teach us, as constituting christian faith and practice. In professing this belief, as we do in sincerity and without the smallest reserve, we hope we may put in a humble

claim to the name of christians; and may unpresumptuously say with the apostle, if any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's even so are we Christ's. We doubtless may err—who may not err?—in our interpretations of the sacred volume; but, if it be so, it is our understandings, we trust, not our hearts, which are in fault. One thing, at least, will hardly be denied, that however much the religious structures of different communions of christians may vary in form, proportion, congruity, harmony and beauty, the *foundation* and the *materials* of all that is serious and practical in their christianity must be essentially the same as that which we have adopted.

Undoubtedly however—though we hope we do thus fundamentally agree with all the sincere disciples of our Lord in every nation and age—we have some characteristic and not unimportant modes of viewing the theory of our religion. Our interpretations of the scriptures, any more than those of any other single body of christians, do not agree in all respects with those of all the rest. On these peculiarities I now proceed to remark.

II. 1. I conceive, that the chief characteristic of those christians, in whose name I now presume to speak, arises from the view we take of the sentiment contained in our text and other similar passages of the scriptures. Christianity we believe to

be, in the truest sense, a rational religion.* The truths it unfolds conform, we think, to the intellectual and moral nature of man; are consistent each with itself; with one another; with the dictates of conscience, and with the maxims of truth, which the universal reason of man acknowledges and respects. They harmonize, in one word, with the best conclusions and results of those faculties, which God has given us for discerning truth.—Let not our meaning, however, be misunderstood. We neither say, that the truths of christianity were, or ever would have been discovered by reason, unassisted by revelation; nor that the objects, to which these truths relate, can now all be comprehended by reason in all their extent; nor that they are all necessarily founded on facts, which conform to analogies within our present knowledge. Least of all does reason, in our view of it, advance any claim in *opposition* to revelation. We say only, that reason is, equally with revelation, the gift of God; and that both are given for purposes perfectly consistent and harmonious.† We say, that as revelation continually appeals to reason for its proofs, and its conformity to sound reason is an important part of its evidence, a *clear and decided repugnance and contrariety* to reason in any of its doctrines would be so far an argument against its truth. We therefore believe, that the truths of the

---

*Note A. †Note B.

christian religion do contain and can contain nothing, which enlightened reason after full and serious inquiry does not approve. The gospel and a sound philosophy, right reason and a revelation from God must be in perfect harmony, can never really and essentially disagree.

It is difficult to conceive, how any one should fail to see that this must be so, who considers the nature and use of our rational faculties. They are the organs for admitting all truth into the mind; and an intelligent belief of revelation is no more *possible* without the use of reason, than sight is possible without the organ of vision. Religious faith, then, instead of being opposed to reason, is in truth the highest exercise of reason. This is practically felt to be so true, that, when men profess to believe what is opposed to reason, it is only by bringing themselves to imagine, that they have in some way found a sufficient *reason* for renouncing the use of reason. And thus we see the extreme of scepticism and the extreme of credulity meet and unite in the common absurdity of using reason to destroy all confidence in reason.—But our Maker, we may be sure, will never contradict himself in his own works. Having given us reason, as the faculty for discerning truth, he will do nothing, which shall confound and subvert the uses of his gift. He will not say one thing to us in nature, and a different thing in revelation; but as the truths both of reason and revelation flow ultimately from

the same source, they will be consistent with themselves and with every other truth.

But indeed, my friends, to assert seriously, that christianity is not consistent with the best dictates of reason, what is it but to offer to God's word the deepest dishonour? It is to degrade its evidence to a level with that of the religion of Mahomet, or the dreams and fictions of the impostors and fanatics of every age.* It is in effect, to say, that its proofs depend on the internal sensations of every one who receives it; a ground of belief in which we are always exposed to the grossest self-deception, which we certainly can never exhibit to other men, and therefore can never obey the direction of the apostle in the text; and which may be pleaded alike, and is alike unanswerable, whether urged by wisdom or folly, learning or ignorance, honesty or fraud. Such a representation was never learned in the school of the Author and Finisher of our faith. The New Testament is full of appeals to our perceptions of right and wrong; and every argument it contains is in itself a distinct refutation of the idea, that our faith is to supersede the uses or falsify the conclusions of reason. Every miracle our Lord performed, every prophecy to which he referred, was a call on those around him to exercise their reason. No. The religion of Christ is one, which not only permits, but re-

* Note C.

quires us to prove all things, and hold fast only what is true. Let it not then be reproached with elevating itself on the ruins of human reason. Libel it not, I beseech you, by so unworthy a charge. Betray it not into the hands of infidelity by throwing away those arms, which the most exalted reason rejoices to supply for its defence.

But do we then raise the authority of reason so high, as to deny our need of the aids and irradiations of the holy spirit of God? I trust, my friends, that this is far from being true. Our principles leave this doctrine unimpaired to be believed in its most consolatory form. We say only, that these gracious influences will be vouchsafed to us, in consistency with the other gifts of God, by the instrumentality of regular means; and that they will guide and exalt, not supersede and confound our rational faculties.—Do not object to us still, that our views nourish a temper of pride and presumptuous confidence in human reason, fatal to a humble sense of our dependence on God. Our dependence on God is absolute and entire. If any man will show me in what way this sentiment can be more fully expressed, I will adopt his language and renounce my own. We differ from those, who make this objection—if we differ from them at all—only in *going farther than they* do in our belief of this truth. We believe that we depend entirely on God for ordinary as well as extraordinary blessings; not merely for the special influences of his

spirit; but also, quite as much, for every moment's use of the faculty of reason. But, indeed, if the comparison is forced on us, we may venture to ask, which belief is most likely to enkindle a spirit of presumption—that we have received the gift of reason in common with our fellow beings, and that the means and aids for enlightening and elevating it, are alike open to all, who sincerely seek and faithfully use them?—or that belief, which teaches a man, that he is the selected favourite of heaven, and enjoys those miraculous infusions of the divine spirit, which are denied to the honest and intelligent exertions and prayers of his fellow men? In truth, when I think of this latter opinion, I am constrained to say, that it seems to me, that it may claim any other praise sooner, than that of being founded in or promoting the humility of the gospel.*

2. On grounds like these, and in the sense now explained, we believe that christianity is a rational religion. This belief produces an anxiety, that, in all our statements and exhibitions of its doctrines, their *rationality* should be made apparent. This is, in part, the origin of that *difference of phraseology* and of those *different modes of stating the same truths*, which are often remarked, and which form perhaps the most striking difference between us and some of our fellow christians, who feel this

* Note D.

anxiety less strongly, than we do. We vindicate this peculiarity by the consideration, that it is required by the constant changes, which are taking place in the force and meaning of all language, and by that obscurity, with which time is ever incrusting the words and illustrations of elder days. It is an obsolete phraseology, we think, which causes many sentiments, essentially true and perfectly simple, to be involved in a dark, scholastic, and, as it seems to us, needless perplexity.* It is the cause why many phrases are so often repeated with no distinct ideas atached to them, and a complete negation of meaning is often wrapped up and concealed, even from ourselves, in a consecrated dialect. Beside these considerations, however, we no doubt think also, that many of the changes we make in the mode of stating certain sentiments, give a more strictly correct representation of the true meaning of the scriptures. And it would be strange, if no improvements of this kind had been suggested by all the lights which the learning and piety, which have been employed on the sacred volume for a century and half, have struck out. It would indeed be passing strange, if it were true, that it was in the middle of the seventeenth century, amidst the tumult and extravagance of a civil war, when every other branch of knowledge was comparatively in its infancy, that this was the time,

---

* Note E.

when the statement of every point in theology received its final improvement and perfection.* I freely own, that this assertion, which implies that the human mind; instead of being only in its twilight, then touched its highest point of theological illumination, seems to me scarcely less extravagant, than to say, that the period, when the maxims of civil government were finally settled for all future generations, was in the country and at the height of that revolution, which has recently convulsed the world to its centre.

3. But though the differences between us and our fellow christians are chiefly verbal, there are others, which may be thought to be more real. There are some doctrines, on which many good men lay a great stress, which we do not teach as any essential part of christian faith. These doctrines relate to modes of the divine nature, and divisions of the divine essence; to the theory of the divine attributes, and the grounds and extent of the divine decrees; to the origin and transmission of sin; to the methods of God's operation on the human mind; to the final reasons of the œconomy, and the ultimate results of the government of God. Most of these speculations evidently involve questions of the most abstruse metaphysics; questions on which mankind have for ages disputed, and in which the most etherial spirits, after vainly excru-

* Note F.

ciating their understandings, have "found no end, in wandering mazes lost." All that is any way practical with regard to these speculations we embrace and teach; for it lies obvious to the humblest mind.* For the rest, we conscientiously think, that much of them will forever be beyond the reach of the human understanding, till it is enlarged in a higher world; and at any rate, that the scriptures either decide nothing with respect to them, or only indistinctly allude to them, or else decide against such views of them as are often received. We however certainly can never think, that any thing essential to christian faith or practice depends on the decision of these questions. We think it a thing in itself most unlikely, that a religion, designed, like the gospel, to be preached to the poor, the humble and the illiterate, quite as much as to the metaphysical and learned, would have any of its fundamental principles connected with these bewildering inquiries.† It seems to us the most beautiful feature of our religion, that it is so perfectly simple, intelligible and practical. We examine the preaching of our Saviour, and find that his addresses to mankind were all of the plainest character; and can we err when we follow his divine example? We admit in the fullest manner the perfect right of our fellow christians to think otherwise on these points; but we are not able to

*Note G. †Note H

follow them in what seems to us their perilous and unauthorized speculations. We ask them to forgive us, when we say that the light of revelation seems not to our eyes to extend its guiding rays into these regions of perplexity. We beg them to permit us to remain on the open, plain and illuminated ground of our common christianity; and rather to thank God with us, that we can go on so far together, than to refuse us their charity, because we advance beyond it more timidly, and—may it not be?—more cautiously than they.

4. From this view of the practical character of the gospel, and the consequent absence from our preaching of these abstruse speculations, arises what is esteemed another of our characteristics. We take the great end of all religion to be, simply, to make men good; to produce, in the language of the apostle, charity out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. The goodness here meant, is, indeed, of the most exalted character; including not only the duties of self-government and social benevolence, but also, most assuredly, our supreme duties to God. It is the goodness, which was exemplified in its perfection by our Lord; it is that goodness which is to fit man for the communion of the spirits of the blessed throughout eternity.* This moral influence on the human character it is, which seems to us to be the end of

* Note I.

all religion. It is that, to which every thing which revelation unfolds, is only subsidiary and ministerial. The whole substance of christianity, therefore, seems to be contained in three words: the *nature of christian duty;* the *means of performing it; our motives to use them.* The whole theory of christian preaching, then, must be to exhort men to christian duties, in the use of christian means, and by the excitement of christian motives. We have no conception of the meaning of religion, if it mean any thing different from this. We do confess, therefore, that we feel bound to remember, in its plain sense, the solemn charge of Paul to Timothy; "It is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they that have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works; these things are good and profitable unto men."—It is St. Paul, who is speaking, my friends, not we; and with his warrant, and with the example of a greater than Paul, even his Master and our Master, we ought to think it a small thing to be judged of man's judgment. We must consider the epithet, which is sometimes applied to our discourses, that they are "moral sermons," to be an epithet of honour, not of disgrace. They must share it in common with our Lord's own sermon on the Mount.

5. It is another characteristic of our views of religious truth, that they do not lead us to expect single and instantaneous effects from its influence,

so much as a gradual and permanent operation. We deny not, that there are real examples of sudden conversions from sin to holiness. We bless God for them. But this is not, we think, the usual history of mankind; nor do the representations of the scriptures lead us to expect it will be so. We do not doubt, that good effects have sometimes been produced on particular persons, by throwing them into a sudden spasm of terror or agony of remorse. But in general we think, that men become virtuous—as they become wise—by constant and gradual accessions, and not by sudden impulse or miraculous illumination. Our preaching, therefore, does not aim, so much as that of some others, at immediate excitement. We hope, by the blessing of God, to produce a more calm and steady and rational and, therefore, we think, more probably, permanent influence on our hearers. Our manner is consequently less impassioned; in the sense, that we do not so constantly touch the springs of terror in the human breast. We are not insensible, that this manner can never be so acceptable to that class of hearers, who delight to be powerfully moved; who expect from a sermon the effect of a tragedy; and are accustomed to think, that a strong emotion is a great virtue. But though we are sorry to be thought unprofitable preachers by any of our fellow christians, we yet think, that popularity may be purchased too dearly. We seriously doubt the general and permanent good effects

of applying a constant stimulus to the stronger passions of the soul. It is apt, we fear, to rouse them at first to unnatural, and not always very valuable exertions; and at last to expend their energy and wear out or palsy their power. It is, however, a question of fact. We do not court, but we certainly do not decline a comparison, as to the practical efficacy of the two modes of preaching, considered in their effects on the whole character, through the whole of life, of all the different classes of mankind.

We confess, then, that our principles lead us to the exercise of caution in our addresses to the passions. If this were the place for speaking of our individual failings, we should not hesitate to admit, also, that, from the difficulty of finding the exact medium between extremes, which is the great task of human life, this caution may sometimes be carried too far, and degenerate into a coldness and want of becoming earnestness. May God forgive us, wherever this is in any degree the case. There is nothing in our principles, however, which justifies any want of zeal, or excludes at all the most affecting appeals to the best feelings of the human heart. Our views of it, we trust, do not rob religion of any of its salutary power to move and raise and melt the soul. The character of God appears not to us less merciful or less glorious, than to our brethren. Christ seems not less endued with all-sufficient power to enlighten, redeem, and

exalt his sincere disciples; nor are his labours and his sufferings for us less entitled to our most grateful and affectionate remembrance. The aids and consolations of the holy spirit of God seem not to us to be less freely or less impartially offered to all who sincerely and humbly ask them, than they do to our brethren. Sin appears not to us less opposed to our nature, and to the benevolent designs of God; nor does its connexion with misery in every stage of our being seem less evidently to be the established and eternal law of the divine government. He, whom such motives and such views as we embrace will not warm and excite to the love of holiness and dread of sin, and to ardent and persevering efforts to produce that love and that dread in those, who are committed to his care, must be impassive to the influences of all that is most animating and awful, all that is most touching and sublime in human conceptions. It surely does not follow, because we think, that views of religion, produced and nourished by fear chiefly or alone, will be ignoble and degrading, that we are less—in truth we ought to be more—induced to address the principles of love, hope, gratitude, and, in its due degree, fear itself, together with all the sympathies and affections of our moral constitution. We regard it as a very incomplete and erroneous view of human nature, as well as of christian theology, to suppose, that the best effects of our religion are to be felt, or the highest style

of moral character to be produced, without the use of the affections. The glory and beauty and perfection of the christian character will never be seen, except where all the faculties of our moral and intellectual nature are called into action to produce and adorn it; where reason makes itself tributary to affection, where faith is warmed in the heart, as well as enlightened in the understanding; where a sense of duty and a sense of interest, philosophy and sensibility, prudence and enthusiasm, while they temper and regulate each others tendencies, unite in prompting to sublime and disinterested benevolence to man, and supreme love and devotion to God.

I might remark on some other and less peculiar characteristics of those christians, in whose name I have spoken, but it is necessary that I should forbear. I will only repeat my hope, that the observations, which have now been hazarded, will be taken, as I am sure they are meant, in the spirit of entire good will towards those who differ from us. I profess towards them a real respect. I see among them very many bright and true exemplifications of the christian character. I bear them witness, that they have a zeal towards God. I doubt not, that their modes of representing truth may have a real use to some classes of minds. It may be one of the reasons, why the sacred writings are not framed more systematically and technically, that a provision is thus made for such a difference in the

mode of regarding some points of secondary importance, as is adapted to the differences in the mental constitution and habits of mankind. This is a view, which I acknowledge to be refreshing and consoling to my mind, when I consider the different sects, into which the christian world is divided. It enables me to see without pain the success of those, whose views of christian truth vary a good deal from my own; regarding their exertions, as I am thus permitted to regard them, only as diversities of operation under the influence of the same spirit. At least, however, there is nothing in the differences, which have been noticed in this discourse, which need to loosen, far less to rupture the bonds of christian charity or christian fellowship between us and our brethren. They are such differences as might even be made subservient to mutual improvement. If a spirit of mutual candour and friendship could be cultivated, if we would concede to each other the great protestant right of individual judgment, and if, while contending earnestly for what we believe to be truth, we would remember our own weakness and fallibility, we might contribute to guard each other from that tendency to rush into extremes, to which we are all so liable. After all, whatever may be said or thought in the heat of controversy, it is impossible, that any one should seriously doubt, that all christians have ultimately the same object. For have they not all the same interest, the same eternal interest; and

what imaginable motive can there be, with the immense majority of them, to attempt to deceive others or themselves? How can it be thought, that men, acknowledged to be men of integrity on every other subject, should wantonly and madly desert their principles on that subject only, which is of all the most momentous? Would to God that the time might at length come, when christians would apply the same maxims in judging of each other's motives and views in religion, that they feel to be just in every other case!

But with whatever feelings the views, which we take of the nature and design of the gospel, are regarded by others, we are not at liberty to alter them. We beg our brethren, who think hardly of us for our opinions, to believe, that we have adopted them in the honesty of our hearts. We conscientiously think, that a rational representation is the true representation of God's word. We think, the genius of the age requires that it should be made, if christianity is to retain any hold of the greater part of thinking and cultivated minds. It will not do, that, when every other department of human knowledge has been in constant progress, the science of theology alone should remain with only those statements and illustrations, which were given it during the darkness of the middle ages. It is not sufficient to reply, that the belief of many good persons in some of the most important truths is so connected with long established prejudices,

that they will be in danger of abandoning these truths along with these prejudices. This is an argument for caution and moderation in our exertions; but it is no good argument to relinquish them. If Luther and his followers had listened to it, the reformation would not have blessed the world; and the timid spirit of Erasmus would have purchased its repose at the expense of the loss of the opportunity of emancipating mankind from ignorance and error.—But it is not right, that our fears should be all on one side. While we respect the prejudices of the unenlightened, we ought not to despise the serious objections of the thinking part of mankind. The consequences of presenting to them only such views of religion as revolt alike their understanding and moral sense, must be a real, though it may be a secret abandonment of all faith in its authority. A double doctrine will thus be established, of thinking with the initiated and talking with the vulgar; a system, which, as has been finely and truly said, "is beyond any permanent condition of human society destructive of ingenuousness, good faith and probity; of intellectual courage and manly character; and of that respect for all human beings, without which there can be no justice or humanity from the powerful towards the humble."*

Having then such views of the importance of the principles which we have embraced, and be-

* Sir James Mackintosh's review De L'Allemagne par Mad. de Staël.

lieving, as we do, that they correspond with the results of the researches of the ablest and most pious inquirers after the truth as it is in Jesus, the path of our duty is plain before us. We must follow it at any hazard. If we did not, the holy confessors of our faith in every age would disown us, the intrepid genius of the reformers would disdain us, the sacred shades of our fathers would reproach us for shrinking from our duty and disgracing our illustrious origin; and where, oh where, should we appear, when called to give up our great and final account!

It is with these views of christian truth, that we now enter this temple to dedicate it to Almighty God. And may he grant that, so far as they are just, they may here be preached and heard, till this lofty spire bows under the hand of time, and these massive walls crumble into their primitive dust.

III. It would correspond, I believe, to a general custom on occasions like the present, if we were now to look back to the ancient history of this church. But our church has no history, beyond the short and simple annals of the ministrations it has regularly witnessed. When, however, I say, that it affords no materials for public history, I conceive that I give to it the highest praise. For history, we know, records not on its blood-stained

page the peaceful triumphs of religion in private life, but is too often the register only of intrigue and warfare, of the crimes and enterprises of bad ambition. It is now nearly a century of years, since a temple was first erected on this spot, which had been consecrated by the piety of our fathers from time immemorial to this sacred use. It was not established in the spirit of schism; but was the result of the regular overflow of other churches, many of the members of which contributed towards the expense of the undertaking. The progress of this church has been as harmonious, as its origin was peaceful. It has never been found in collision with any other church. Its spirit has always been liberal. Its terms of communion have never been narrow and exclusive. Its ministers have always been catholic in their feelings. The list of them is begun by the venerable Checkley, followed by the affectionate Bowen, the interesting and eloquent Howe, the acute and profound Everett. I could add another name, but my heart is forbidden to utter its feelings. The house which was first erected here, after having stood for ninety-seven years, has now given place to that in which we meet. Erected, as it has been, in most disastrous times, I may be allowed to consider it as a noble monument of the spirit of our citizens; a pledge that they consider religion as their best refuge in calamity; and that the last sentiment

they are willing to lose, is that of respect for her worship.*

Come, then, fathers, brethren, friends, christians, let us again invoke the presence and blessing of the most high God. We solemnly consecrate this temple to Him; to the religion of his Son, who died for us; to the spirit of evangelical piety, charity and truth. Henceforth may the angels of celestial love take up their dwelling in this sanctuary, and ever may they carry from it to the mercy seat of heaven the tribute of humble, grateful, devoted hearts, the offerings of sincere and acceptable worshippers!—Ye holy walls! henceforth sacred to the religion of Jesus—peace be within you! For my brethren and companions sake, I will now say—peace be within you! Never may ye be polluted by hypocritical prayers—never may ye echo with heartless praises—ever may the words of truth be dispensed within you in their simplicity and uncorrupted purity—never may ye witness the love of Christ commemorated here with unthankful remembrance, or his cause dishonoured by faithless professions! Here may all the best influences of the gospel—all its regenerating, sanctifying and elevating influences—ever be felt! And long after the voice, which now feebly sounds within you, is hushed in silence—long after these worshippers shall all have passed away from the earth—may

---

* Note K.

their children and their children's children to the latest generation here taste the joy and peace of believing, and find that this is unto them, as it has been to their fathers, none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven!

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FOREGOING DISCOURSE.

I owe to the Society, with which it is my happiness to be connected, some explanation of my delay in complying with their request. The following discourse was not originally designed, and does not now seem to me well adapted for the press. From the extent of the subject, the views which it offers are unavoidably very general. The necessity, also, of preserving, as far as might be, the distinction between a sermon and a dissertation, has occasioned a want of fullness in the reasoning and illustrations, which—though pardonable, perhaps, in what is intended only to be spoken—may not meet the same indulgence, when submitted to the inspection of a reader. I had concluded, for these and other obvious reasons, to decline to comply with the wishes of my friends. This determination, however, has been changed by the informa-

tion I have recently received, that some parts of this discourse have been much misapprehended, and misstated. It is now published, as it was originally delivered, except some verbal corrections, and a few unimportant additions.

I am sensible that it may appear presumptuous, to have undertaken to speak in the name of my brethren. The motive, which justified it, however, was well known to those to whom the discourse was addressed; and if it should chance to meet the eye of any others, they will of course perceive, that though the plural form is used, nothing more than the sentiments of an individual are given. I have endeavoured, it is true, to represent accurately the opinions of that class of christians, with which I habitually think; but it is proper distinctly to say, that no part of this discourse was communicated to any person before its delivery; and that, therefore, the writer alone is responsible for the correctness of the statements it contains.

In speaking of the principles advanced in this discourse, as the *characteristics* of particular christians, it will not be supposed, that these christians claim to be the exclusive adherers to them. Nothing more is meant, than that these are some of the general maxims which they agree in receiving, and which they adhere to, it may be, with something more of fidelity and consistency than others. So far from arrogating an exclusive regard to them

for any single body of christians, I take great pleasure in believing, that they are held substantially by a large proportion of the members of all Protestant communions, whether adopting the distinctive names of Lutherans, Calvinists,* Episcopalians, or Arminians. There is no general principle, indeed, taken in this discourse, for which there may not be produced the authority of persons of each of these churches, and those too among the most illustrious for learning and piety.

After these remarks, I need scarcely observe, that, when the phrase, "rational christianity," is used in the following discourse, it is by no means to be considered as applicable merely to a compa-

---

* I am permitted, I fear, to claim the authority of those christians, who are known by the name of High Calvinists, or by the kindred name of Hopkinsians, for but few of the principles, which I have advanced. Except in our own country, however, the number, I believe, is small, of those, who make the chief peculiarity of Calvin a fundamental article of faith. I subjoin a quotation on this point from the Rev. Robert Hall; who will, I presume, be universally admitted to be the most distinguished ornament of what is called the orthodox or evangelical party in Great Britain. In speaking of the evangelical clergy, he remarks: "we cannot dismiss this part of the subject, without remarking their exemplary moderation on those intricate points, which unhappily divide the christian church; the questions, we mean, in relation to predestination and freewill, on which, equally remote from Pelagian heresy and Antinomian licentiousness, they freely tolerate and indulge a diversity of opinion, embracing Calvinists and Arminians with little distinction; provided the Calvinism of the former be practical and moderate, and the Arminianism of the latter be evangelical and devout. The greater part of them, we believe, lean to the doctrine of general redemption, and love to represent the gospel as bearing a friendly aspect towards the eternal happiness of all to whom it is addressed; but they are much less anxious to establish a polemical accuracy, than to 'win souls to Christ.'" *Strictures on a work entitled "Zeal without Innovation."* p. 35. Lond. 1809.

ratively small number of christians, who hold particular opinions on the metaphysical nature of our Lord. Such an appropriation of that phrase I conceive to be entirely unjust; and to breathe something of the same narrowness of spirit, which these christians are not backward to censure in others.

But neither bigotry nor liberality are exclusively of any sect; and all men ought to guard against the tendency, which the pride of spiritual superiority produces, to think that our own opinions are identified with the conclusions of reason, the dictates of conscience, and the commands of God.

The term "apology," in the title of this discourse, is used in its original sense as nearly synonymous with "defence" or "vindication." ΑΠΟΛΟΓΙΑ, the learned reader will recollect, is employed by St. Peter in the text.

FEB. 9, 1815.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

A.

THE general principle of the conformity of christianity to the conclusions of enlightened reason will hardly be disputed by intelligent christians. It is a ground, which has always been taken by the most able and judicious defenders of the gospel. It was very fully surveyed and illustrated about

the middle of the last century, by Dr. Doddridge, Dr. Benson, Dr. Randolph, and Dr. Leland, in the controversy occasioned by the deistical tract entitled *Christianity not founded on Argument.*

B.

"Reason is natural revelation, whereby the Eternal Father of Light and Fountain of all knowledge communicates to mankind that portion of truth, which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties. Revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries, communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God. So that he, that takes away reason to make way for revelation, puts out the light of both; and does much the same, as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope."

Locke's Essay, B. iv. c. 19.

C.

"To those especially, who seek for conviction in certain inward feelings, which the warmth of their imaginations represents to them as divine, I would recommend the serious consideration of this important fact; that the foundation, which *they* lay for the Bible, is no other than what the Mahometan is accustomed to lay for the Koran. If you ask a Mahometan, why he ascribes divine authority to the Koran, his answer is: because, when I read it, sensations are excited, which could not have been produced by any work, that came not from God.***But do we not immediately perceive, when the *Mahometan* thus argues from inward sensations, that he is merely raising a phantom of his own imagination?***The christian, who thus argues, may answer, indeed, and answer with truth, that his sensations are produced by a work, which is *really* divine, while the sensations excited in the Mahometan are produced by a work, which is only *thought* so. But this very truth will involve the person, who thus uses it, in a glaring absurdity. In the first place he appeals to a criterion, which puts the Bible on a level with the Koran: and then to obviate this objection, he endeavours to show the superiority of his own appeal, by *presupposing* the fact, which he had undertaken to *prove*."—*Prof. Marsh's Lectures.* P. II. L. III. p. 51—52. *American edition.*

D.

I am anxious, that the principles, which have been advanced under this head of the discourse, should be taken with the explanations and limitations, which I have endeavoured studiously to annex to them. I would particularly beg it to be observed, that it is by no means denied, that the *objects*, to which the truths of revelation relate, may contain many things not fully comprehensible by reason. Indeed there is perhaps no object pre-

sented to us either by nature or revelation, which the human mind can be said entirely and perfectly to comprehend in all its relations and properties. The humblest flower, that springs up under our feet, contains that, which the most exalted philosophy can only teach us to wonder at and admire. Still, however, so far as a true philosopher asserts any thing with regard to its existence, structure, growth, or any of its properties, powers, or connections, he perfectly understands what he asserts, and employs language only in such a sense as may be intelligible to others. In like manner, all truth, intended to be conveyed to the human mind, must be intelligible in itself, and conveyed in language intelligible by those to whom it is addressed. The truths of revelation form no exception. They are expressed in words, which are the signs of human ideas, and which, therefore, can only be employed to convey the ideas, which men have annexed to them. We may, of course, form ideas of all the propositions contained in the scriptures. But of that which is unintelligible, the mind can take no cognizance, can have no belief, can give to it no assent. We may make the *form* of a proposition with respect to it; but it cannot have the *reality* of one. It is nothing—nothing but idle words. We need not scruple to say, that to believe a proposition, which either includes a contradiction, or else has no assignable, no intelligible meaning whatever, is a thing which is in its nature impossible. The scriptures undoubtedly can contain no such proposition.

It is evidently very consistent with these remarks, to believe, that revelation may indulge us with only very limited and imperfect views of many interesting truths. We now see through a glass, darkly. But these intimations, we are to remember, are all that revelation *designs* to give us, because they are probably all we are now capable of understanding, or all which can fitly be made known to us in a state of probation. We are not permitted to consider them merely as food for our conjectures, or materials from which we are to construct our own precarious systems. I do not mean, that we are bound, or that we are able wholly to repress the curiosity, which they so naturally excite; but we are to beware how we place our conjectures on a level with the truths which the gospel unfolds. When treating of truths, as the doctrines of scripture, and the fundamentals of christian faith, we are to stop where the scriptures stop. We are not to be wise above what is written.

Let us take, as an example, what the scriptures declare as to the efficacy of the death of our Saviour. There is perhaps no proposition on this subject, in which so many christians would agree, as that of Paley;* "that our Lord's death and sufferings are spoken of in the scriptures in reference to human salvation, as the death and sufferings of no other being are spoken of; and that the full meaning of these passages cannot be satisfied

* Paley's Works, Vol. IV. Sermon XXIII. passim.

without supposing, that these sufferings and death had a real and essential effect in procuring that salvation." It is not my purpose to inquire into the accuracy or completeness of this statement. Granting that it is a correct representation of what the scriptures teach on this subject, and of all that they clearly teach, it would follow, from what is remarked in the preceding paragraph, that we are not at liberty to declare from our own conjectures, or from a very few and obscure texts of scripture, *in what* the efficacy of our Lord's death consists, or *why* so great a sacrifice was *necessary* for the remission of sins. These are the *secret* things, which belong unto the Lord our God; and it is those things only *which are revealed*, which belong unto us.

In the application to the interpretation of the Bible of these principles with regard to the office of reason, which I have now endeavoured to illustrate, there is need, I confess, of great caution; but also of great fidelity. They can never lead us to reject a single article clearly revealed there, as an article of christian faith. They can never teach us to say, that the scriptures err; but they may and will sometimes lead us to suspend our belief in the correctness of our own researches into the scriptures, or to say, that we do not at once understand a particular passage, or that some interpretation different from the obvious and literal one is the true meaning. If then, in the study of the scriptures, we should find any thing apparently self-contradictory and unintelligible, we ought to suppose the defect to be in us, not in them. A longer study will show us, that the difficulty was only apparent. But if this apparent contradiction should still remain after all our inquiries, it is surely better to suppose, that we misunderstand the scriptures, than that they are unworthy of God.

Every Protestant of every sect acknowledges these truths, and acts upon them with more or less consistency. On what grounds, for example, do we all reject the doctrine of transubstantiation? The Catholic may produce to us the words of our Saviour; *this is my body:* and again; *except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* It is not to be denied, that the plain and literal meaning of all this is, that we do eat and drink in the Eucharist the actual body and blood of our Lord; or as the Catholic has it, the body and blood of Almighty God himself. But all Protestants, with united voice, exclaim, that this interpretation is impossible; that it includes every kind of absurdity and contradiction, and that the reason, which God has given us, authorizes us to say, that no evidence could render such a doctrine credible. We proceed then to show, from other passages of scripture, as well as from its general strain and spirit, that the language of our Saviour in this case is merely a figure of speech authorized by the genius and idiom of the languages of the east.

The zeal of some christians, in vindicating the scriptures from the reproach of containing any doctrine inconsistent with reason, has undoubtedly sometimes led them to serious errors. But while we steadily discountenance

a rash and intemperate criticism, we are bound not to despise too lightly their motives, which may be respectable, or their learning and talents, which may be great and splendid. We ought to be well assured, that there are no circumstances, which may have innocently led our brethren into what we esteem error, and especially to be certain, that for doctrines, which we believe and they deny, there can be adduced passages of scripture equally and more express and unequivocal, than those which the Catholic can cite for the belief of the actual presence.

To the infidel, who triumphs in the belief, that the scriptures are so loose and indeterminate as to admit of opposite interpretations, I would briefly reply. It would be very strange, if books, like the scriptures,—of such high antiquity, written in languages so unlike our own, and now no longer spoken, in countries too where habits, manners, taste, customs and opinions, so different from our own, prevailed—to say nothing of the difficulties produced by the modern and unauthorized division of them into chapters and verses—it would indeed be strange, if such books should be as easy of comprehension in every part, as if they were written in our own country, and in our vernacular tongue. The only inference, which can be admitted as a legitimate and necessary one from the fact of the differences among serious and intelligent christians is simply this; that the doctrines in question between them can constitute no essential part of christianity.

The difficulties in the interpretation of the New Testament are chiefly found in the epistles of St. Paul. On the causes of this peculiar obscurity in his writings, I beg leave to refer to a sermon on this subject by my ever-lamented friend, the late Rev. J. S. Buckminster.—Before it is concluded, that the epistles do not admit of a perfectly consistent and rational interpretation, the comments of Grotius and Locke should be diligently studied. I refer to these great men the more readily, because, as laymen, they were exempt from any professional bias, and because their competency to these inquiries is above all question.

E.

"You may have observed, that persons, in attributing fanaticism to evangelical teachers, often fix on the phrases, more than the absolute substance of evangelical doctrines. Now would it not be better to show them what these doctrines are, as divested of these phrases, and exhibited clearly in that vehicle, in which other important truths are presented, and thus at least to repress their scorn? If sometimes their approbation might be gained, it were a still more desirable effect. Persons, who had received unfavourable impressions of some of the peculiar ideas of the gospel, from having heard them advanced almost exclusively in the modes of phrase on which I have remarked, have acknowledged their prejudices to be diminished, after these ideas had been presented in the simple general language of intellect. We cannot indeed so far forget the lessons of experience, and

the inspired declarations concerning the dispositions of the human mind, as to expect that any improvement in the mode of exhibiting christian truth will render it irresistible. But it were to be wished, that every thing should be done to bring reluctant minds into some degree of doubt, at least, whether if they cannot be evangelical, it is because they are too rational."

Foster's Essays, p. 210, 2d. Am. edition.

F.

I fear I shall grieve some excellent persons, when I say, that I here allude to the Westminster Assembly's Catechism. It will be observed, however, that these remarks do not deny, that this compend has various and great merits, for the time when it was made; but are merely intended to suggest the inquiry, whether it ought to be considered as the final result of all that the human mind can do, in stating the doctrines of our religion. Unless it have this perfection, it cannot be right to speak of it as the standard by which "to try all doctrines;" to use it as the text of sermons, and to teach it to young and old, as if it were an inspired digest of the scriptures themselves. I make these observations with the more confidence, since this catechism is confessedly so imperfect, that the General Association of this state, composed of ministers, who appropriate to themselves the name of orthodox, cannot be brought to subscribe this instrument without the qualifying clause, that they receive it only "*for substance.*" When, in addition to this, it is considered, that this work, after all, contains nothing more than the sentiments of the majority of a body of men, in an age not otherwise thought to be very enlightened, with no peculiar exemption from error, and certainly under many very great disadvantages for calm and dispassionate judgment, it will not be considered as a forfeiture of one's christianity to believe, that some of its doctrines may now be stated in a manner more conformable to the improvement of biblical science and the general progress of the human mind.

It is almost needless to observe, that the comparison suggested in the text is not meant to extend farther than to imply, that, as times of extraordinay excitement and contention concerning the principles of government are evidently unfavourable to wise decisions in politics, a season of similar excitement, with regard to religious, as well as political opinions, cannot be the most friendly to the best decisions on points of theology.

G.

The distinction between what is practical and what is speculative in these subjects is a very clear one. Take for example the discussion relating to the sinfulness of the human heart. The gospel addresses all mankind as sinners; it takes it for granted, that there are deep and powerful, and, if indulged, ruinous tendencies to evil in the human breast. There is no dispute on this *fact*. All christians believe it. But what is the method,

which the New Testament takes to convince us of this truth? Is it by dissertations on the *origin* of sin, or the *manner* in which it was introduced into our constitution? or by showing that these propensities to evil have *no antagonist principles* within us, but that we are called on, at the peril of our salvation, to contend against them without arms and without strength? I appeal to the unprejudiced readers of this sacred volume to say, that this is not the mode in which our Lord or his apostles address mankind. No; they think it enough to call upon every man to look honestly and humbly into his own character, to compare himself with God's law, and to let conscience be faithful to its office. No man, who does not instantly perceive, after such an examination, that in many things he offends daily, and in all comes short of the glory of God, will ever be convinced of this fact by ten thousand arguments relating to original and imputed sin. A man can be humbled for no sin, can repent of no sin, can be converted from no sin, till he is made conscious, that he is PERSONALLY guilty of it; on the *facts of the case*, of the sinfulness of the human heart, there can never be any doubt or dispute, in individual instances, among serious and honest men. A similar *practical agreement*, I apprehend, might be shown with regard to all the doctrines, to which I refer in this part of the discourse.

It will be remarked, that I have no where meant to imply, that the christians, whose sentiments I defend, have no opinions on these speculative questions; or that they entirely agree in their judgments upon them; or that they attach no importance to the different sentiments, which are embraced with respect to them. Undoubtedly among all thinking men there will be varying opinions on all these difficult points; and there are not a few persons, whose claims to the name of truly liberal as well as learned divines are not to be disputed, whose views on some of these questions approach towards those, which are embraced by christians of the most rigid and exclusive character. The only point, in which they would all agree is, in saying, that those *practical principles*, in which all christians unite, are of higher authority and weightier importance than our metaphysical speculations can be; and in declining therefore to make a man's opinions with regard to any of these disputed points the test of his christian character, or the term of christian and ministerial communion with him.

H.

It is with religion, as it is with morals, nothing can be more plain than its practice, nothing more difficult than many parts of its theory. This, it should seem, ought to lead a christian teacher to the same course, which a judicious moralist pursues. Who, that was desirous of impressing on mankind at large the practice of the virtues of benevolence or gratitude, would think of discussing before a miscellaneous audience the controversy with regard to the origin of our moral ideas, and contending either for the theory of Cudworth, or Hutcheson, or Butler, or Price? Would he not rather ap-

peal at once to our sense of right and wrong, and call us to read those sacred and indelible characters, in which God has written the obligation of these virtues on the human heart?—These different theories are, no doubt, in a philosophical point of view of great moment. But whether he embraces the one or the other of them, does not every wise and good man acknowledge the supreme authority and importance of those *facts, in which all good men agree*, and allow that his ultimate appeal must always be made to the universal moral sentiments and emotions of the human race? "Fortunately for mankind," says Mr. Stewart, "the great rules of a virtuous conduct are confessedly of such a nature, as to be obvious to every sincere and well disposed mind. And it is in a peculiar degree striking, that, while the *theory* of ethicks involves some of the most abstruse questions which have ever employed the human faculties, the moral judgments and moral feelings of the most distant ages and nations with respect to all the most essential duties of life are one and the same." *Philosophy of the Mind*, Vol. II. p. 392—3. Boston edition.

I.

To avoid the possibility of misconstruction, I wish to repeat, that by the *moral influence* of the gospel, is meant its influence in the production of inward, as well as external obedience; the holiness both of the heart and the life. "Repentance towards God" of course must stand in the foremost rank of christian duties; and "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" must be the *origin, motive, principle*, of that reformation, which is always included in the "repentance, which is unto salvation." In like manner, all of what are called the "doctrines" of the gospel are, in our view of the subject, included under its *motives*. There is no value in the mere belief of any of them, except so far as that belief operates on us "in overcoming the world," in "purifying the heart," and inducing "newness of life and new obedience."

There is, perhaps, no one principle of such primary importance, both to the theological inquirer and the practical christian, as that this moral influence of the gospel is its great and ultimate design, as *far as it respects man*. It is that grand and luminous truth, around which all the other truths of the religious system arrange themselves, and from which they derive all their lustre and all their value to man. It is a principle attended with a plenitude and clearness of evidence, which no other possesses. Any thing really inconsistent with it, we may be sure must be false. Tout ce qui tend à l'immoralité n'est jamais qu'un sophisme. Let any one, who doubts the extent and importance of this principle, attempt to state to himself any other end of the christian revelation, than *to fit men for heaven by making them good*, and he will at once see, that he can assign no one, which must not ultimately be resolved into this. Who indeed can have any doubt on this point, who considers how distinctly it is declared, that the *ultimate*

end of the death of our Saviour himself is its moral influence on his disciples. "And this we are assured of," saith Bp. Fowler, "by abundance of express scriptures, some few of which we will here produce:"

Rom. vi. 6. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, *that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve him.*

2 Cor. v. 15. He died for all, *that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again.*

Gal. i. 4. Who gave himself for our sins, *that he might deliver us from this present evil world,* (viz. from its corrupt practices) *according to the will of God and our Father.*

Ephes. v. 25, 26, 27. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, *that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Colos. i. 21, 22. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, hath he now reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, *to present you holy, unblamable and unreprovable in his sight.*

Titus, ii. 14. Who gave himself for us, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

1 Peter, i. 18. For as much as ye know that ye were not *redeemed* with corruptible things, as silver and gold, *from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;* but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish and without spot.

1 Peter, iii. 18. For Christ also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, *that he might bring us to God,* &c. That is, saith Calvin upon the place, that we might be so consecrated to God as to live and die to him.

1 Peter, ii. 24. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, *that we being dead to sin should live to righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.* Design of christianity, by Bp. Fowler, apud Watson's Theological Tracts, vol. vi. 339, 340.

K.

The following chronological memoranda may perhaps be valued by the members of the New South Society.

First meeting on record for the formation of the society, July 14, 1715. New House dedicated: sermons by Dr. Cotton Mather and Rev. Benjamin Wadsworth, January 8, 1716. Church covenant signed, and the Rev. Samuel Checkley ordained Pastor, April 15, 1719. Rev. Penuel Bowen ordained colleague Pastor, April 30, 1766. Rev. Joseph Howe ordained Pastor, May 19, 1773. Rev. Oliver Everett, do. January 2, 1782. Rev. John Thornton Kirkland, do. February 5, 1794. Inducted President of Harvard College, November 3, 1810. Present Pastor ordained, May 15, 1811. Old house taken down, April, 1814. New house dedicated, Dec. 29, 1814.

A DISSERTATION.

A DISSERTATION,

On the kind and degree of evidence necessary to establish the Doctrine of the Trinity, and by which we might expect the Doctrine of the Trinity would be supported in the Scriptures.

It will easily be acknowledged, that in all inquiries which depend on moral evidence, the correctness of our conclusions will be very much affected by the standard of proof by which we try them. If this standard is either too high or too low, if we require either too much or too little evidence, we may disbelieve where we ought to be convinced, or be convinced where we ought to disbelieve. The sceptic, who demands a kind and degree of proof inconsistent with our moral nature, our state of probation, and the analogy of the divine government, is led to throw away the inestimable aids, and motives, and consolations, and hopes of christianity. The believer in Transubstantiation, on the other hand, who is satisfied with evidence insufficient both in its measure and its nature, is led to embrace a faith, which makes the gospel itself incredible, by making it responsible for a doctrine

contradictory to nature, to reason, and to other parts of the scriptures themselves. It is evidently very important, therefore, that we should guard against the danger of requiring too much, or of being contented with too little proof of our religious opinions. For this reason it seems to be proper, that one, who has never critically examined the proofs of the doctrine of the Trinity, should inquire, by what sort of evidence we may justly expect such a doctrine would be accompanied. Mr. Yates, in his 'Vindication of Unitarianism,' has touched on this subject; but its importance may be thought to justify a more ample consideration.

A doctrine may, *a priori*, or previously to a minute inquiry into its proofs, have a presumption either in its favour, or against it. A proposition which is at once perceived to be consonant to reason and the general tenor of the scriptures, will have a previous presumption *in its favour*, and may be believed to be a true doctrine of christianity, with little hesitation. On the contrary, a proposition, which is apparently both irrational and unscriptural, will have a previous presumption *against it*, and requires a more scrupulous examination, and a fuller and more unequivocal evidence, before it can be embraced. There is a previous probability, for example, that the doctrine of a providence will be found in the New Testament, and a previous improbability, that the doctrine of transubstantiation will be found there.

In applying this general principle, we may safely say, that there is a strong presumption that the scriptures will not be found to contain any doctrine apparently inconsistent with the unity of God. There is no truth of greater clearness or higher authority, than that there is but one God. Both philosophy and revelation unite in confirming it. The systematical unity and harmony of design conspicuous throughout the universe, extending to the moral as well as the physical world,* lead us to the conclusion that the cause of all is One. All the arguments, which demonstrate the existence of God, lead us to the same conclusion. They all result in this, that the non-existence of an infinite, original, eternal mind, implies an absurdity, a contradiction, an impossibility. But this reasoning can hold of only one such mind. For, since one such mind is adequate to every effect, if it could be maintained that more than one could exist, it might be said of *each* of them, separately, that its nonexistence is possible; and necessary existence, therefore, could be proved of *neither* of them. That therefore, which is the essence of every argument for the being of a God, would lose all its force, and Atheism would be established on the ruins of all religion. But, indeed, the existence of one *infinite* mind excludes, by the very definition of infinity, the possibility that there should be more than one. If we attempt to form the supposition of a second infinite

* Stewart's Philosophy of the Mind, Vol. II. p. 324—7. Boston ed.

Being, we at once see, that it must in every particular be entirely coincident with the first; that is to say, as to all our ideas, it will necessarily be one and the same.*

To this great truth, that there is but one God, both the Jewish and Christian revelations lend all the weight of their divine authority. Nothing can be more full and express than their testimony to this point. It was the great object of Judaism to preserve this truth amidst the polytheism of the ancient world. So sacred was it esteemed by the Jews, that it was a custom of theirs even till modern times, to repeat every morning and evening the passage of Deuteronomy; HEAR, O ISRAEL, JEHOVAH OUR GOD, JEHOVAH IS ONE. It is needless, however, to multiply proofs of this point, since it is one of those primary principles, *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum.* All christians, of every name, with whatever inconsistency it may sometimes be done, are compelled by the force of scripture testimony to acknowledge, that there is

* "For if we suppose more than one, it is plain, since the attributes of infinite power, knowledge and goodness include all possible perfection, that they must be entirely alike to each other without the least possible variation. They will therefore entirely coalesce in our idea, *i. e.* be one to us. Since they fill all time and space, and are all independent, omnipotent, omniscient, and infinitely benevolent, their ideas cannot be separated, but will have a numerical as well as a generical identity. When we suppose other beings generically the same, and yet numerically different, we do, at the same time, suppose, that they exist in different portions of time and space; which circumstances cannot have place in respect of the supposed plurality of infinite beings. We conclude therefore, that there is but one infinite being, or God." Hartley on Man, Vol. II, p. 30, 4th edition.

one God, and that there is none other, but He. We are authorized by this universal concession to take this doctrine as an axiom in all our reasonings on this subject, and to say, that whatever else may be false, this must be true.

As therefore the unity of God stands on the highest possible evidence, we are sure, that all other truths of religion will be *really* consistent with it, and of course there is a high probability that they will all be *apparently* consistent with it. We ought to view every proposition, which seems to contradict it, with doubt and suspicion; for we are certain, that such a proposition must either be false, or else that we do not understand it. We are justified therefore in saying, that there is, *a priori*, a strong presumption against any proposition which apparently interferes with the doctrine of the Unity of God. We do not say that this presumption is so strong that no evidence can remove it. But we must all admit, that till the compatibility of such a doctrine with this primary truth is rendered manifest, every thing must be presumed against it, and nothing in its favour.

Now there is scarcely any one who will deny that the doctrine of the Trinity is *apparently* inconsistent with the unity of God. There is a strong *apparent* discordance, we must all own, between the two propositions, that God is One, and that God is Three. It is not till after many subtile and metaphysical distinctions are made, that any one

will pretend that the harmony and consistency between them become visible. This is true of all the technical statements of this doctrine which have ever been given. They have undergone many changes since the doctrine of the Trinity was finally completed towards the close of the fourth century; but the same essential difficulty still adheres to them all. It must always be affirmed, under some form or other, by every believer in a Trinity in unity, that *Three*, in some sense or other, *are One*, and *One is Three*. It is true, that while any term of the proposition is declared to be mysterious, ineffable, and indefinable, it is impossible to demonstrate that it affirms a contradiction. We only say of it that it is *apparently* inconsistent with the doctrine of the unity of God in the natural and plain meaning of words. We say only, that if it mean any thing like what such words *would* mean in any other proposition, it means something, between which, and the assertion that three Gods are one God, it is *difficult* to discern a difference.

The *apparent* inconsistency of the doctrine of the Trinity with the unity of God becomes much stronger, when we examine the *practical* statements that are given of it. In speaking of its theory, its advocates secure themselves from attack, by declining to say *what they mean*, and calling that a mystery, which might otherwise seem to be a contradiction. "Unless we have *some notion of* the

thing itself," Mr. Wardlaw exultingly asks, "on what principle can we possibly make out its contrariety to reason." But the case is different in the practical statements of the doctrine of the Trinity. When the proposition is entire, and the contradiction would appear manifest if words were allowed to bear any distinct meaning, its friends protest, that they use the word "Person" only "for want of a better word," and declare, that we have no definite conception in what sense it is to be understood. But when they speak of the "Persons" *separately*, their difficulties seem all to vanish. Mr. Wardlaw after all his grave descant on mystery and things above reason, in stating the proposition of the Trinity, when he comes to discourse on the personality of the Holy Spirit, suddenly finds a flood of light open on him. His ideas become as distinct as those of other men, and it is evident he means by "Person" what every one else means. Thus it is with all the believers of the Trinity. When they speak of the persons who compose it separately, there is little difficulty in understanding their meaning. They ascribe severally to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, all that goes to make up our ideas of three perfectly distinct Gods. Each has a different name; different agencies or offices; distinct and independent power; and above all, each is a distinct object of supreme worship and adoration. Of the Father, it may be said, that He is the infinite, eternal, self-existent God: of the Son it may be said, that He is the in-

finite, eternal, self-existent God: of the Holy Ghost it may be said, that He is the infinite, eternal, self-existent God. It is expressly declared, that these are not merely different *names* or different *modes* of operation of the same person. The pronouns I, Thou, He, may be used as freely of each of these different "subsistences," as they may be of three different men. Now all we say of this doctrine, which applies the name and attributes of God to three distinct and independent agents, is, that to a common mind there is in it an *apparent* inconsistency, a *seeming* incompatibility with the doctrine that there is One God and none other but He. The most zealous Trinitarian must admit, that if the same proposition were found in the Hindu Mythology, we should take it, till better informed, for something very much resembling a contradiction.

The use we make of these facts and reasonings is, not to say that the doctrine of the Trinity *cannot* be found in the scriptures, but simply that we should not *expect* it to be found there. There is a very high probability, a strong previous presumption, that it will not be found there. A student of the Bible is bound to take it for granted, that it is not there, till it is proved that it undoubtedly is; he must conclude it to be false, till it is fully and clearly demonstrated to be true. Every thing must be presumed against its evidence, and nothing in its favour. It will prove nothing for such a doctrine, that passages can be produced, which may

possibly mean something like it, unless it can be unequivocally shown, that they *cannot possibly mean any thing else.* We must all sit down to the study of the scriptures as Unitarians; and nothing but their clear and decisive testimony ought to make us Trinitarians.

We have suggested, that in proportion as the previous presumption against any doctrine is strong, the evidence by which this presumption is to be set aside, may be justly expected to be correspondently abundant and clear. This expectation is heightened, in proportion as the sources, from which the evidence is drawn, are fewer and narrower. In a case like that of the Trinity, where the doctrine is acknowledged to be of the highest importance, and where the scripture testimony is the only medium of proof, we may certainly look for the utmost plainness and directness in every proposition relating to the subject. The presumption against the doctrine of the Trinity, and the consequent necessity of an increase of proof to remove it, become stronger, when it is considered, that this doctrine, if proved at all, must *be proved from the New Testament alone;* as we shall now attempt to shew.

I am aware, that there is a small number of passages in the Old Testament, in which it is thought some allusions are found to a plurality in the divine nature. If these passages alone, however, were all the support of the doctrine of the Trinity, I

imagine none would think them of great weight. No one will say, that a reader of the Old Testament *merely*, would find there any revelation of three distinct objects of supreme religious worship. He would find nothing from which he could infer, that Jesus Christ is the supreme, self-existent God, the Father of Jesus Christ also the supreme, self-existent God, and a Holy Spirit proceeding from them both, also the supreme, self-existent God. We may think, that *after* this doctrine has been clearly discovered in the New Testament, we may find allusions to it in the Old. But no one, I am confident, will affirm, that a reader of the Old Testament *merely*, *at the present day*, would find there any mention of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the connexion in which they are now used.

It is generally acknowledged, that this was in fact the state of mind of the great body of the Jewish nation, at the time of the appearing of our Lord. It has indeed been very laboriously attempted to be shown, that vestiges of something like a doctrine of the Trinity are to be found in the faith of the ancient Jewish Church. But it is conceded by Basnage, and even by Allix and Jamieson, that if this idea had ever been entertained, it was lost among the mass of the Jews whom our Lord addressed. Whether right or wrong, they were beyond all question wholly unsuspicious of any modification of the divine unity. Still, however, our argument admits of taking a less broad position;

and to avoid all possibility of cavil, we shall simply say, that at the time of the introduction of the gospel, it was wholly unknown to any human being, that worship is to be addressed to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Let it now be considered, with what kind and what degree of evidence we are to expect this doctrine would be unfolded in the New Testament. A doctrine of great magnitude was to be disclosed, against which there would justly arise, at first view, in the mind of every believer in the unity of God, a very strong presumption. It was not a truth of natural religion which was simply to be republished and confirmed; but a truth was to be revealed in apparent contradiction to natural religion. The Jews, too, we must remember, had been accustomed to the greatest solemnity in every thing which related to the great and only object of worship. It was from the "awful top," and amidst the terrors of Sinai, that God declared to them, "I AM the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other Gods before ME." A most important modification of this commandment was now to be made. Two entirely new objects* of worship were to be revealed,

* No Trinitarian can object to this statement of their doctrine as teaching three distinct and supreme objects of worship. They certainly do represent our Lord to be as much an object of prayer and adoration, as God his Father. Indeed, if the three constituents of the Trinity are three distinct objects of thought, they are also three distinct objects of worship. If they are not distinct objects of thought, how absurd is it to pretend to speak of what we cannot even think?

and the first commandment was now to be so far changed, as to run more correctly thus: We are the *Lord* thy *Gods.* Thou shalt have no other Gods before us. Let those, who deem so highly of the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, who make it the basis of the gospel, who believe there is no christianity without it, who think that all the best hopes of man depend on its truth,—let these persons say, with what clearness and what solemnity we might expect such a doctrine to be revealed?*

Might we not expect, that our Lord himself would at least *once* have stated the doctrine of the Trinity in express language, and have insisted on the importance and necessity of believing it. Would he not, at least once, have declared formally and explicitly, that the first commandment was no longer to be understood in its plain and literal meaning; the meaning in which all his hearers had been accustomed to understand it. The word *God* oc-

* "I cannot help considering it as a monstrous insult to the Divine author of revelation," says Mr. Wardlaw himself, as truly as eloquently, "to admit the supposition for a moment, that on such subjects as these it should be necessary to wade through the multifarious opinions of antiquity, in order to understand his meaning. I say on *such subjects as these;* for if on *these* points there is such a want of explicitness—points that regard the objects of worship, the state and prospects of man, and foundation of his hopes for eternity,—on what subject shall we look for precision? If it were indeed the case, that on such topics as these the Bible is indeterminate, requiring for the explanation of its language the commentary of ancient opinion, the infidel would be furnished with an argument against its divine origin, more powerful than any he has ever been able to produce." Preface. IX. [Nothing can be better said than this.]

curs nearly *thirteen hundred times* in the new Testament, and might we not suppose, that, in some one of these passages, we should be expressly told, that the term is meant to include, not simply *one*, but *three* persons or subsistences, to each of which that title is applicable? If, in every instance where this word is used alone, it implies a plurality in the divine nature, should we be unable to find one solitary example of the application of plural pronouns in the whole New Testament? Would neither our Lord, nor any one of his Apostles, have left a single sentence, in which the whole doctrine of the Trinity can be fully and accurately expressed? Should we expect to find no care to make accurate and evident distinctions between the doctrine of a Trinity and the dangerous Polytheistical notion of the heathens? The doctrine of the unity of God is more than once introduced in the New Testament, and laid down most clearly and solemnly. Our Lord himself repeats these most impressive words to the Scribes. The first of all the commandments is: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Now, could we have supposed, that, as our Saviour knew this would be construed by all his hearers as teaching, that there is only one object of supreme worship, he would have omitted such an occasion as this of declaring, that in truth there are three? Could we have supposed, that since the main argument for the Trinity, from the Old Testament, rests on the plu-

ral form of אלהם, which Mr. Wardlaw translates *Gods*, the Evangelist should have chosen to destroy this argument by using the singular noun Θεος, which all know it is impossible should be translated otherwise than simply God?

If it should be said, that there might be reasons why our Lord did not *publicly* teach this doctrine, should we not expect some account of his *private* communications of it to his *disciples*? Would they have preserved no record of their first knowledge of a truth so wonderful, and so essential a part of the christian system? If we can suppose that our Saviour himself forbore to teach publicly that, which was in fact the great principle on which his whole gospel turned, why this reserve in his disciples? The gospels were not written till several years after his death, and many of the epistles still later, and should we have expected, that they would not have given a hint of the time or the circumstances, when this stupendous truth was unfolded to them? Observe in the Acts, how minutely and fully the manner is declared, in which the doctrine of the extension of Christianity to the Gentiles was unfolded. And could we have thought, that the first revelation of the so much more difficult and so much more incredible doctrine of the Trinity, would not have occupied a single line of the sacred history? We are told so unimportant a thing as when the disciples were first called Christians. Would the time, when the worship of

one object of adoration was exchanged for the worship of three, have been thought unworthy the passing notice of the recorders of our faith? If for any reason it was improper for the Apostles themselves, in all their different epistles, to give a single example of ascription to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, would it have been too much to expect, that we should be informed, *when* such worship was first made lawful and *necessary* for other Christians?

But if all these expectations were groundless; if it were necessary, that such a doctrine, though it must be learned from scripture alone, should yet never once be fully and plainly declared in the scriptures; if we could suppose, that it would only be dropped incidentally, and be left to us to collect and put together, from a few fragments of discourse thinly scattered through the sacred volume; if we could suppose, that not only whole chapters, but whole books, should exist without the smallest allusion to that which is the key-stone of the whole gospel; if all this were no more than was to be expected, still could we believe that the New Testament should contain any thing *contradictory* to this doctrine? Could we have supposed, that there should be TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY PASSAGES in the New Testament, from which our Saviour's *subordination* to the Father may be deduced; and not less than FOUR HUNDRED AND FORTY passages in which the Father is so mentioned, as

to lead to the conclusion that he is exclusively the supreme God. We may easily account, on the Unitarian hypothesis, for many very strong and elevated epithets ascribed to our Saviour, a Being so dignified in himself, so perfect in his character, so great in his office, and now so highly exalted by his God. But what account can be given of passages, which contain the most express and formal *contradiction* of the equality of Jesus with God? Or, if this for any inconceivable reason was necessary, at least should we not expect, that the manner in which the contradiction was to be reconciled would be explained or hinted at? If we were reasoning on any other subject, we should say, that one such passage as this, "My Father is greater than I," introduced with nothing to explain or limit it, would set aside a thousand mere *inferences* of *ours* in favour of a doctrine, which contradicts this truth. They who can believe, that, although it was the express design of St. John in his gospel to supply the deficiencies of the other Evangelists with regard to the Trinity,* he would yet set down without a word of caution or comment such passages as these, "I came from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of *him that sent me;*" "My doctrine is *not mine*, but his

* This idea is maintained by Trinitarians, notwithstanding the evangelist expressly tells us: "These things are written that ye might believe, that Jesus *is the Christ, the son of the living God*, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

that sent me;" "The father, which sent me, gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak;" "The Father, *that dwelleth in me*, he doeth the works;" "For THE FATHER IS GREATER THAN I;" "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, THE ONLY TRUE GOD, and Jesus Christ *whom thou has sent*"—they, I say, who can believe, that these and other similar passages would be set down by a Trinitarian, in the act of proving his doctrine, with no word connected with them to restrain their natural import, ought at least to be more sparing of their charges on others of want of reverence for the scriptures.

These expectations with regard to the kind and degree of evidence, which we might have expected to find in the New Testament, for the doctrine of the Trinity, are not only intrinsically reasonable, but conform to the analogy of the scriptures themselves. The doctrine of *immortal life* is in some respects under similar circumstances with that of the Trinity. Neither of them is expressly taught in the Old Testament; though it is thought that there are allusions to both. Moses, however, as he never taught the Hebrews, that there are more objects of worship than one, so he never employed a future life as the sanction of any of his laws. So far there is an agreement in the circumstances of the two doctrines. In all other respects, that of the Trinity is by far the stronger case, and would seem to require a much fuller and clearer

revelation. The doctrine of immortality is one, which, if not demonstrable from the light of nature alone, certainly has many most powerful arguments in its favour. Bishop Butler has finely shown, that there is nothing in the fact or circumstances of death, which furnishes any presumption against its truth. We know it also as a historical fact, that it was the belief of the great body of the Jewish nation at the time of our Saviour's advent. The Pharisees who embraced it were the ruling party. All these are circumstances which would seem to diminish the necessity of a very full, formal, and frequent recognition of the doctrine in the New Testament.

But how stands the fact? This doctrine, which is really a fundamental, is treated as such throughout the New Testament. It shines every where in heaven's own light. It fell constantly from the lips of our Lord. It is asserted and reiterated by every one of his apostles. It is interwoven into the whole texture of Christianity. If then such plenary proof is afforded to a doctrine, which reason, instinct, the tradition of the earliest antiquity, and every good feeling of the human heart, all dispose us to embrace, what evidence may we not justly expect for such a doctrine as the Trinity? The previous presumption is all *against* this opinion, as much as it is *in favour* of the doctrine of immortality. Up to this very day, its advocates have been unable fully and fairly to state it in any lan-

guage, in which terms have a known and definite meaning, without involving an assertion of three Gods, or else an express and manifest contradiction. We have a right to expect, therefore, that this difficulty will be removed in the scripture, and that all we are to believe on this subject will there be expressed in plain and intelligible language. It is from this source alone, we are to remember, that we are to gather all our ideas on this subject. This high and awful mystery lies wholly within the province of revelation. How strong and clear, then, will be the light, which will be shed on it in the sacred volume, if it be indeed a truth, and especially a fundamental truth of christianity! How much stronger and clearer, than that which is thrown on the doctrine of immortal life!

I have thus attempted to state some preliminary considerations, which ought to be kept in view by every one who is about to examine the New Testament on the subject of the Trinity. It is believed to be utterly impossible, that a man of a sound mind, who carries with him to the scriptures just views of the evidence which this doctrine demands, or may be expected to possess, can receive it as a part of the gospel, especially as a truth essential to salvation.

OCT 31892